


# Art, walking, and embodied ecology: Three voices in resonance

Arte, caminhar e ecologia incorporada: três vozes em ressonância

 Antunes, Rui<sup>1</sup> | Caracol, Bruno<sup>2</sup> | Guezennec, Soazic<sup>3</sup> | Scott, Joanne<sup>4</sup>

 <sup>(1)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3268-3005> | <sup>(2)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8019-5932> | <sup>(3)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8001-8536> | <sup>(4)</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4768-8175>

<sup>(1)</sup> Universidade Lusófona, CICANT, Portugal | <sup>(2)</sup> Artist, Portugal | <sup>(3)</sup> Artist, France | <sup>(4)</sup> Universidade de Coimbra; Universidade do Porto, Portugal

<sup>(1)</sup> [rui.antunes@ulusofona.pt](mailto:rui.antunes@ulusofona.pt) | <sup>(2)</sup> [brunocaracol@gmail.com](mailto:brunocaracol@gmail.com) | <sup>(3)</sup> [soazicguezennec@gmail.com](mailto:soazicguezennec@gmail.com) |

<sup>(4)</sup> [joanneemmascott@gmail.com](mailto:joanneemmascott@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This interview features three artists whose practices use their physical presence and actions in natural settings as both an instigation and a departure point, offering reflections on ways of seeing and valuing what often goes unnoticed. It explores the creative power of not fully understanding—of being present in the moment, guided by improvisation, rhythm, and elements that reveal time. The conversation turns to nature: not as an untouched wilderness, but as a concept shaped by culture and industry. The “Wild” is not the absence of humans, but a mode of relationship with them. To reintroduce nature into the city, to collaborate with it, is to challenge these boundaries. Through collecting traces, following gestures, and embracing deep time, a new understanding of human and more-than-human relations emerges—one that is intelligent, balanced, and profoundly relational. There is beauty in disappearance, in unrepresentable experiences, in fleeting encounters that resist capture.

## Keywords

Ecology, Artistic Creation, Art-life, Nature

## Resumo

Esta entrevista apresenta três artistas cujas práticas utilizam a sua presença física e ações em ambientes naturais como instigação e ponto de partida, oferecendo reflexões sobre formas de ver e valorizar o que muitas vezes passa despercebido. Explora-se o poder criativo de não compreender totalmente — de estar presente no momento, guiado pela improvisação, pelo ritmo e por elementos que revelam o tempo. A conversa volta-se para a natureza: não como uma natureza selvagem intocada, mas como um conceito moldado pela cultura e pela indústria. “Selvagem” não é a ausência de humanos, mas uma relação com eles. Reintroduzir a natureza na cidade, colaborar com ela, é desafiar estas fronteiras. Através da recolha de vestígios, do seguimento de gestos e da adoção de uma noção de tempo profundo, emerge uma nova compreensão das relações humanas e mais do que humanas — uma compreensão inteligente, equilibrada e profundamente relacional. Há beleza no desaparecimento, nas experiências irrepresentáveis, nos encontros fugazes que resistem à captura.

## Palavras-chave

Ecologia, Criação Artística, Arte-vida, Natureza

## 01. Introduction

Quand le père du père de mon père avait une tâche difficile à accomplir, il se rendait à un certain endroit dans la forêt, allumait un feu et il se plongeait dans une prière silencieuse. Et ce qu'il avait à accomplir se réalisait. Quand, plus tard, le père de mon père se trouva confronté à la même tâche, il se rendit à ce même endroit dans la forêt et dit : “nous ne savons plus allumer le feu mais nous savons encore dire la prière”. Et ce qu'il avait à accomplir se réalisa. Plus tard, mon père (...) lui aussi alla dans la forêt et dit : “nous ne savons plus allumer le feu, nous ne connaissons plus les mystères de la prière mais nous connaissons encore l'endroit précis dans la forêt où cela se passait et cela doit suffire”. Et cela fut suffisant (...) Mais quand, à mon tour, j'eus à faire face à la même tâche, je suis resté à la maison et j'ai dit nous ne savons plus allumer le feu, nous ne savons plus dire les prières, nous ne connaissons même plus l'endroit dans la forêt mais nous savons encore raconter l'histoire. (Godard, 1993, 00:24)

[When my father's father's father had a difficult task to accomplish, he went to a certain place in the forest, lit

a fire, and immersed himself in silent prayer. And what he had to accomplish would come about.

When later my father's father found himself confronted with the same task, he went to this same place in the forest and said: 'We no longer know how to light the fire, but we still know how to say the prayer.' And what he had to accomplish came about.

Later, my father also went into the forest and said: 'We no longer know how to light the fire, we are no longer familiar with the mysteries of prayer, but we are still acquainted with the exact place in the forest where all this happened, and that should be enough.' And it was enough.

But when, in my turn, I had to face the same task, I stayed at home and said: 'We no longer know how to light the fire, we no longer know how to say the prayer, we don't even recognize the place in the forest, but we still know how to tell the story.] (Godard, 1993, 00:24, our translation)

With words like this, Godard, in “*Helas pour moi*”, reflects a theme of disconnection from spiritual roots, the fading of traditions, and the reliance on storytelling as a

means to preserve cultural memory.

I [Rui Antunes] invoke this idea to add a silly trope to this progression: My grandfather was a farmer, a rural person, and had no plants at home. Whereas my father, a city person, had two plants that I can recall – in fact, my mother did. I, in my tiny apartment, live with 15 plants. This is in Lisbon, a city where a new trend of snack bars and restaurants is emerging, flourishing with plants in settings that often resemble jungles.

In a time of growing virtualization of experience, it is timely to question the body in space, and more than that, the body in natural space. For this purpose, I have summoned 3 voices that are somewhat dissonant in form but convergent in the interest that they share in walking and ecological thinking.

If echo “Oikos” is on the one hand the study of the house, of the common home, on the other hand, it refers to echo, “echo” the vibrating resonance. I then wanted to explore three vibrations that help us delve deeper into the actions that some artists, like them, create within natural spaces: existential ways of affecting and being affected. These vibrations stem from the presence of a living body in space, from its performativity, its actions, gestures, and movements.

If art is a technology of enchantment, as the British anthropologist Alfred Gell proposes (Gell, 1998, as cited in Tércio, 2024), one that makes it possible to act upon energetic flows, as Daniel Tércio argues (Tércio, 2024), what enchantments, what transformations arouse the relationships that are established by their presence, interpellations, and activations in a reticular mesh of small assemblages. What do contemporary artists have to say – those who are heirs to the artistic movements that emancipated themselves from the White cube and the Black box and who sought artistic practices situated in nature?

We have engaged in a chat as a walk. Wandering, with no predefined route. Like someone who eats cherries: one invites the next.

**Soazic Guezennec** is a French visual artist whose work explores the entangled relationship between humans and the natural world, with a strong ecological sensitivity at its core. Working across painting, video, land

art, installation, and performance, she creates immersive experiences that invite reflection on our environmental impact. Born in Switzerland and having lived in diverse cultural settings—including Berlin, Mumbai, and Paris—Guezennec brings an expansive, global perspective to her practice, which is now grounded in the landscape of *Bretagne*, France.

Her practice can easily be described as ecological art, and on her website, she presents her work through thematic series like “Humans in Nature,” “Spiritual in Nature,” and “Post Nature.” She also facilitates workshops such as “Drawing and Painting from Nature” and “Exploring the Existing.” On one platform, her work was aptly described as a form of healing art—an invitation to reconnect with both the earth and ourselves.

**Joanne Scott** is an artist-researcher currently based in central Portugal. Her interdisciplinary practice includes audio-visual performances, interactive installations, participatory events, sonic experiences, and sound walks. Holding a practice-based PhD in intermedial performance-making. Scott’s work focuses on exploring human engagement with the more-than-human world, aiming to prompt new perspectives and foster connections with the landscapes and ecosystems we inhabit.

Her recent projects include “Urban Wild\_Life,” that delves into encounters with urban nature through audio-visual mixing practices and live performance. In 2024, she contributed a chapter titled “Interstitial City Woodlands: encounters with enfolded debris in urban wildscapes” to the edited volume “Forests and Fences.”

**Bruno Caracol** is a Lisbon-based artist and researcher, born in 1980, whose work explores the complex relationships between humans and nature. He holds a Master’s degree in Communication Sciences from FCSH-NOVA, where he focused on the concept of “wild nature” as a cultural construct.

His artistic practice is interdisciplinary, spanning visual arts, sound, and performance, with a strong emphasis on ecological themes and the ways in which human societies interact with the environment.

One of his most notable projects, *Ver como um Lobo* [To see Like a Wolf], investigates the historical and sym-

bolic tensions between humans and wolves. The project includes installations featuring objects such as dried wolf tracheas—traditionally used by pastoral communities for medicinal purposes. Blending artistic expression with anthropological research, Caracol invites a thoughtful reflection on the dynamic interplay between human culture and wildlife.

**Rui Filipe Antunes** is an artist, researcher, and lecturer working at the intersection of digital arts, virtual reality, and computational approaches to human movement. He holds a PhD in *Arts and Computational Technologies* from Goldsmiths, University of London, and is a research fellow at CICANT – Universidade Lusófona. His work explores algorithmic representations of the body, motion simulation, and immersive experiences in AR/VR. A former Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow, he has led and participated in several international research projects and is co-founder of AnabiVirtual. His artistic and academic output has been widely exhibited and published.

## 02. Interview

I have no philosophy: I have senses ...  
 If I speak of nature it's not because I know what it is  
 But because I love it, and for that very reason,  
 Because those who love never know what they love  
 Or why they love, or what love is.  
 (Caeiro, 1946, as cited in Pessoa, 2006, p. 11)

### Motivations for an ecological inquiry

**[Rui]** - This desire to get into nature, where does it come from? In your practice... I don't know if any of you want to start.

**[Soazic]** - At some point, I realized that, through art, I was trying to bring nature back into the city. I created what I called a "surreal estate agency," imagining nature reclaiming urban spaces. Art became a way for me to cope with the frustration of being disconnected from nature. Much of my work imagined a world where nature and culture, nature and the city, could coexist once again—something I rarely saw in real life.

Two years ago, I decided to return to Brittany, to re-

connect with the natural world—not just through my art, but through my life. That shift has deeply transformed my creative process. Now, my work feels more collaborative. I don't just use nature as material for art—I engage with it. I co-create with nature, embracing its unpredictability and rhythm. This collaboration feels deeply rewarding, as I now see myself as part of a living creative process rather than its sole author.

So yes, that's where I am now.

**[Rui]** - Do any of you want to add something?

**[Bruno]** - I can relate with what Soazic said. There are some processes in my work where I feel that some forms or results—I wouldn't be able to imitate or try to reproduce them without... Like when you use a form that a plant created, or a trail that animals made by walking. The trail is a form, a shape, that if you try to reproduce, either you are really obsessive, imitating a real example, or it becomes just a caricature, a representation of an idea. Like when you draw a tree—when you try to draw a tree from your imagination... If you don't know trees very well, you end up drawing a generic tree, not something specific.

But also, for me, it started in my personal life. In my childhood, I grew up in the suburbs of Lisbon. At that point, the town I lived in—Algueirão—was transitioning from a small countryside village into a city. It grew a lot in my father's generation, with the burst of migration to urban centers during the '60s. In my time it was the expansion of the real estate business and the widespread access to credit pushing this urban growth. I saw hills and forests become urbanizations. And when this kind of project happens, at least in the peripheral areas of Lisbon, there's always wasteland. It loses its function. It's waiting to become valuable real estate. It's not used anymore as agricultural land, but it's not a park either—it seems to be waiting to become a building. And in between, there are plants and animals that end up using it as a place to live.

This is probably where my work started, when I was still living in Lisbon—or in other cities, like Rio.

But also, for me, this relationship with nature is a way

of understanding human relations: how we spread ourselves, where we live in the territory, how relationships become established. I mean, it gets more transparent sometimes, when you look from the point of view of beings that are not taken as subjects. Some things become more transparent in the social dynamics of places.

My last project was in Barroso... I am actually in Barroso [a nationally protected area of Gerês] right now; I just went for a walk to the hills today to take photos of a wolf trap, one of these that people used to build in this region.

The most common configurations are two walls that converge into a pit. These walls can be as long as a couple of miles, usually a few hundred meters. They're on the tops of hills, at the turn of a slope. They were used by the local population: in the beginning of spring, villagers would come to the hill and line up to scare the wolves into the traps. So it was also using the shapes of the hills and ways of surprising the wolves. Maybe we can talk a bit more about that later...

**[Rui]** - It is interesting, because these traps are also ecological and geologically driven. Jo, do you want to add something?

**[Joanne]** - It's just lovely to hear about all of your different practices and different ways of engaging with, and working with, nature. That's really a privilege—really rich to hear those things.

I don't know. It's such an interesting question.

I've never been asked that question before, and I think the thing is that I didn't grow up in an environment that was particularly nature-rich. I grew up in suburban landscapes in the north of England—nature was a garden and walks in the countryside, occasionally. But certainly nothing from that stage of my life that would have connected me to, or made me think in wider ways about, nature.

And as a researcher and artist, that certainly wasn't where I began either. I began with technology. I was interested in playing with technological toys in performance—you know, projection and sound and mixing these live—which I am still interested in, actually. That was my first love, I suppose, in terms of making work and researching as well.

And now that I think about it, it's so interesting that

you were talking about that stage, Bruno, where you lived outside Lisbon and became swallowed up by the city. You have these different spaces that are almost indeterminate or ambivalent in their nature—not quite the countryside, not quite the city, but also not yet in use in formal ways.

Because the prompt for me, I think, to start to research and practice in relation to nature—and with nature—was when I moved, funnily enough, to Salford, which is near Manchester in the northwest of England. It's a classic post-industrial city; it's the "dirty old town" of the Ewan MacColl song. So, it's known for, you know, chimneys belching out waste in the industrial era, and a very polluted river that ran through it.

But when I moved there—and I've always lived in cities too—I'd never lived in a city so *wild*, wild in terms of nature. It's got amazing, rich, urban woodlands and green spaces. I just started to explore them. I started to walk them, and I started to ask questions about the nature of those spaces in cities in particular: why they're so special, why they're so valuable, but also why they're so difficult and challenging—as well as why they have this inherent ambivalence.

People often don't feel safe in those kinds of spaces in cities, where perhaps they would if they were in a more rural environment. So, nature—and the growth of plants and trees in this very abundant way, but in these spaces *in between* the city—became this space that I really wanted to explore more. From that point onwards, nature and ecological processes—other-than-human processes—have sat at the centre of what I'm interested in.

I've looked at things like the happenings of "wild nature." What does it mean for something to have this self-willed element to it, where it's running outside of human control and where there is something about what the plant or the tree or the ecology is doing which is exceeding our expectations, or our needs, or our wants?

And I'm really interested—at the heart of everything that I do—in the relationship between humans and other-than-humans. Particularly for me, at the moment, it's vegetal life: it's plants and trees, but also rivers and other kinds of environments as well.

And in the end, I've centred my work on that. So, my work is, at the moment, primarily sonic. I use sound as my main tool for working with nature. So, if I go walking, I will often be field recording, and I'll often be making sound as well. I use a lot of songs in my work as a way of expressing, connecting, reaching out—trying to make forms of representation, connection. Sometimes failed, often, but also, you know, that's very much part of the mix and the ecology.

So, now I live in a very rural environment—it's the first time I've ever lived in such a rural environment—and so my practice and my interests have shifted accordingly. I'm not looking as much at wild nature in cities; I'm looking at industrialized nature in the countryside. So, forest plantations in Portugal—and looking at those through a few different types of lenses. Again, I can talk about this a little bit more as and when we come into it. And yeah—I think that's probably enough for now.

### Wild, Wild, Wild

**[Rui]** - This topic of industrialized nature... What does it mean to be wild? Or better, what does it mean to you to be a wild nature?

There is this guy, Yuk Hui, who disagrees with this idea of "wild" pristine nature, as if this is all part of human geography. Even the most remote land... take, for instance, the spread of pesticides.

Do you have something to add to this, Soazic? Because when you go out, you don't use tools. What's your approach to this?

**[Soazic]** - When you mentioned *wild nature*, I was asking myself: what does that really mean? What is wild nature? Is it a place untouched by human presence, free of any trace of human activity? And as you suggested—maybe such places don't even exist anymore. I'm not sure there's anywhere on Earth that's truly untouched now, except perhaps underwater. Those might be some of the last remaining places that are still, for the moment, pristine.

To answer your question: I don't go into nature looking to impose something on it. I go to find what's already there—not so much tools, but mediums and surfaces—the

way land artists once did. I look for what's present in the landscape that I can use to create something with.

One of my favorite practices is painting on rocks. I source clay directly from the cliffs and mix it with water right there. I then apply it onto the rocks with a brush or sometimes only with my hands.

For me, the work is only complete once it disappears. I take into account the tide—of course the weather too, but especially the tide—to know when I can start, and how long it will take for the sea to wash it away. We have very high tides here, so the work lasts only a few hours.

That gives me a deep sense of satisfaction. I'm not adding more objects to a world already full of objects—which is something I often question as an artist. I think these are the moments when I feel most connected to nature, as an artist. By accepting the ephemeral, I feel I am being part of nature.

**[Rui]** - Can you describe a bit what your process is? How long will an intervention last? My point is: do you get into a trance mode, or kind of...

**[Soazic]** - Yes, I could say I enter a kind of trance when I'm painting, no matter what I'm painting. It's really a process where the painting starts to guide you, rather than the other way around. I don't always plan things out in advance, and actually, that's something I really enjoy.

There is a lot of improvisation. Planning is difficult anyway, because everything depends so much on external elements—the weather, the light, the tides. All I can do is to stay alert and ready to enter into creation mode.

Therefore, I always keep a bucket of clay in my car, so that when I'm on the road, or walking along a beach, and I come across a rock that speaks to me, I'll just stop. If the tide is low, the coefficient right, and the weather favourable, then I take out the clay and start painting.

**[Bruno]** - This erasure seems to be a very important step for you.

**[Soazic]** - It has to follow the rhythm—the natural cycle of the tides, which dramatically transform the landscape here. So by working this way, I feel I need to move in sync with that rhythm. If I introduce something that disrupts it, even slightly, it feels like too much—like an intrusion on the balance of the landscape.



**[Rui]** - And you Bruno, do you plan your trips? And how do you tune? If you plan... For instance, if you go tomorrow, or... do you have a plan for tomorrow?

**[Bruno]** - No, I had a plan for today—I went to the hill. I'm not intervening, as Soazic is. At least, not in this last project.

My work can be about collecting traces or small objects. Like the last work I did before this one with the wolves, where I collected some teeth of wild boar and also some bramble bush spines. And I did some reproductions in clay of these elements, scaled them up. So, sometimes it's about collecting some small objects that are there.

This one with the wolves was about objects that people had in their homes—the dried wolves' tracheas—used in traditional medicine to cure some diseases of domestic cattle. And some people around... well, they used all the body of the wolf in traditional medicinal practices. But the ones that people still have are mainly teeth, skins, and these tracheas.

I was following the work of a biologist and an anthropologist, Francisco Alvarez and Pedro Primavera, in research they did in the 1990s, around 1998, going door to door looking for these objects, they found to check which ones still existed. And I was also registering them and reproducing them.

This also connects with this idea of wild nature... it's a complex idea. If you're talking to a conservation biologist, they tend to have a clear definition: these animals that are not domestic—they're wild animals. There's a kind of function to this simplification, which is: if you want to protect certain animals that are being threatened by human presence, then the idea of wild nature becomes useful for this relation.

For me, I feel that this idea of wild nature is always instrumental. In this process of colonization, wild nature is the next step. If you're talking about a place that was never visited and there are no plans on visiting it, it's not wild—it's something else. The wild comes when... it's at the border; it's next, it's right next to the border. It's part of this movement of advancing civilization, in a way.

**[Rui]** - It's one other?

**[Bruno]** - It's one other, yes. Well, animals that live without human contact—they're not wild. They're just going on, living their lives. And plants—they're just existing without relation to humans. I don't think that this idea of the wild, wilderness, applies in places where there is no possibility of relation with humans. So, it's always like—in the proximity, at a certain distance from humans—it becomes wild. It can't be too close; it cannot be too far. It's like there's some kind of middle ground.

**[Rui]** - And if you're too close, you might be afraid of it... I grew up in the interior of Portugal, where the collective imaginary had wolves close to demons, it was something really scary.

And this goes to the next question, which is: are we romanticizing nature, on the one hand?

And then, on the other hand, which is what you were saying now and before, when you were talking about your experience, Bruno, in Algueirão, close to where I grew up the second part of my life, in Massamá, in the Lisbon suburbs. So I followed closely this process you were talking about—seeing the land waiting to get value. You could feel that it was just waiting.

So, on the one hand, are we romanticizing the wild and nature? And then, on the other hand, this thing of the wild being just an asset, even when we are trying to consider it and value it as wild.

Do you feel we have some kind of simultaneous instrumentalization and romanticization of nature, Jo?

**[Joanne]** - Definitely. I think there are lots of interesting but sometimes quite damaging discourses about nature. Currently, there's a lot of post-nature talk—that whole idea that we're past the point where you can call something natural in its own right. It's all been modified; it's all been shifted in various different ways.

Actually, I was reading Indigenous scholars (Collard et al., 2014) talking about post-nature in a very critical way. They were saying, "No, no, we don't want to think about our environment and our relationship with the environment in that kind of way." They talked about *abundant futures*—like that kind of thing that Bruno was saying, about the next step after colonization—after the colonization of Earth and our relationship with nature. Perhaps the next

step is something that is much more entangled and wilder, but involves us.

I think the word *wild* has been weaponized—clearly. You know, it was used as a way of taking land from people: “This is wild land. It’s not productive. It’s not doing enough. And therefore, we will take that land, and we will make it productive.” And that stays with us. We still think that land should be productive, in very narrow terms. I think that’s very damaging, and it continues to be very damaging for all of us. Because when we try to make everything as productive as possible, when we try to squeeze everything out of the natural space, then we clearly end up damaging it—and we damage ourselves as well.

Because of course, we are utterly reliant on plants and the growth of those plants and trees in our environment. Without them, we’re gone. So that kind of co-dependency—the entanglement we have, the fact that we are all more non-human than we are human—those are the kind of things that I think are really valuable for us to try and develop as ways of understanding relationships and using those as ways of critiquing what we’ve been given as discourses about nature.

For instance, the idea that “Nature is for you. It’s for you to use in these particular ways.” That’s even the case when we talk about nature and mental health—which I’m doing a lot of work in at the moment. I’m not saying it’s not great for people to be out in green spaces, blue spaces, and enjoying them, but the idea of nature as *medicine* for humans is equally as instrumentalizing as any of the other practices—where we’re using nature primarily to serve human needs.

Now, of course, we do need to engage with nature in terms of consuming... what are we? We’re heterotrophs. We can’t make our own food. We have to eat other animals or plants in order to live. So, we have to engage with the other-than-human world, with natural spaces, with vegetal life, in that way. We have to eat it. And we have to grow it in order to eat it.

But I think the ways that have been passed on to us—the kinds of plantation logics (Barua, 2022). I’ve been looking at in my last sound walk—have become deeply

damaging and deeply entrenched in terms of our relationships more broadly. And when I say *our*, I’m thinking about a Euro-Western perspective. I don’t think that’s necessarily across all cultures, and certainly not traditional and Indigenous cultures, which have very different ways of understanding what and who the human is in relation to their immediate environment.

And I don’t think they would think about *wild nature*. In fact, I’ve read that that’s not a term that a lot of Indigenous communities would use, because it’s an irrelevant term for them in terms of conceiving of their environment in those ways or through questions like: *Is it wild? Or is it not wild? Is it productive? Or is it not productive?*

So... I don’t know whether I answered your question there. I *do* think we romanticize. But I also have a romanticizing and speculative kind of imagination about what we could be—and how things could shift. I think that’s really valuable.

### Affecting and being affected

[Rui] - I retain the ideas of *nature* and *mental health*. I would dwell on this a bit more here. When you are in presence, for instance in Rio Cavalos, what does it change in you and what does it change in the environment? I think this will be a question for all of you: Being there in the space, what does it change in yourself. Basically, this is about affecting and being affected. What is the impact you feel that this has on the ecology of yourself and the *milieu*, the environment?

[Joanne] - I think I’d say, briefly, I find it a very complex—and not always, you know, traditionally or conventionally “healing”—thing, being in different types of natural landscapes. So, if I think about that project—that was a lovely, gentle project—about introducing myself to my local river and trying to find out about what that river felt like and what was part of it.

But as part of that project, I walked along the river, and I encountered the hunts. You know, there were people hunting in that space, and it was deeply troubling and scary, because there were bullets and guns everywhere, and dogs barking, and the whole space was transformed by that kind of energy: of men out hunting the boar or



whatever it was they were hunting in that space.

And equally, I can walk up the river, and there are these incredibly beautiful big granite—or maybe other kinds of rock—boulders, which give me this sense of deep time, of something that's been there for so, so long. And that takes you into a completely different relationship and a different way of understanding and feeling and thinking.

So it's not as simple as just saying, you go into a natural space and everything becomes better.

But I *am* interested in nature connectedness, and what are the different ways in which arts practices—creative practices, particularly sited practices—can affect how we feel about, engage with, and pay attention to what's around us. And I think that really *is* of interest.

**[Rui]** - Maybe we will go to Bruno, because the hunters... you probably have a few encounters with them, right?

**[Bruno]** - With hunters, not exactly. You know, with wild boar I had a few encounters, but with hunters, just distant hearing of shots. But not so in encountering them.

This is a tricky question after the romanticization one...

I was going on this walk today, in Gerês. This is the biggest natural park in the north of Portugal. It's as remote as it gets in Portugal. But still, you have the pines that were planted in the 40s by the Estado Novo, this late attempt to modernize land management in the hills of northern Portugal. And so this story is already there.

There were also traces of a fire that happened two weeks ago. So... I wasn't going only for a dive in pure nature anyway. I was going for a dive in the waters of the river, but I was mostly looking for this *fojo*. It's like a very remote construction, and it's really surprising how far into the hills people would build this thing. It took me about three and a half hours to get there. You can feel, or at least have an impression, of a different kind of time. A time and space relation that the inhabitants of these villages had maybe 50 or 100 years ago.

Now, I would say they are... I mean, people are urban everywhere. This kind of idea of rurality is, for me at least, not very useful. It's not something that I can apply to people in villages I know. At least in Portugal.

Also—I'm not living in Lisbon right now, but I did live there for a couple of decades—and we are used to this overwhelming... stimuli, no? Different lights, signs, people crossing. And there is something similar happening in a walk in nature. It's of a very different style—at least, a very, very different shape, but still there's an overwhelming amount of information.

There are animals, plants, and they change. When you come down to a valley, then up to a hill, then cross to the other side, things change completely. So, it's very stimulating in that sense, confusing even, but in a very different way.

And I'm still a bit ignorant in terms of botany, but when you start to learn a bit, then things kind of start to differentiate from each other. And it's not just a plain landscape anymore—but it's like *this* plant, or *that* plant, or *that* tree.

### Naming plants, seeing differently

**[Rui]** - So you start to see a different world. Let me just share a story before going to Soazic. I heard it a couple of days ago, from this person that remembers the exact day when her mother realized that she as a child was not seeing properly, when her mother asked about a boat in front of them by the sea, which she couldn't see at all. She was mesmerized then, after she got the glasses to find that trees had leaves. She never saw them before.

I am reminded of this now, from what you are saying, because of the names of the flowers and so on, because then you enter into a different world, it's in a different world when everything has a different contrast and...

Soazic please, what do you think?

Let's continue going around. But can I also add another topic here? Before I tried to get you into this meditative thing. Are you searching in your practice for something spiritual or whatsoever?

So, three questions basically: does it change, what changes, and are you searching for *this*?

**[Soazic]** - I wouldn't say I'm actively searching for it, and I hesitate to even say "being in nature," because I'm not sure what that really means. As you were saying, Jo, "nature" is a very Western concept. It's quite specific to an Occidental worldview, and in some cultures, the word

doesn't even exist in the same way. I prefer to say "being outside", being under the sky, in the fields, in the forest, under the sea. That feels more accurate to me.

Maybe I can tell you about the project I'm working on now in Brittany. I'm doing a residency at a biological research center—the Station Biologique de Roscoff—where scientists study marine life. I proposed a project focused on rock pools, those little pockets in the rocks that stay filled with water even when the tide goes out. They're like tiny worlds where all kinds of species continue to live, even though the sea has pulled back.

Scientists consider them extreme environments because they go through such intense fluctuations—temperature, salinity, acidity—all in a single day. These ecosystems are now being studied as models to understand climate change, because the organisms there have developed incredible adaptive mechanisms.

The other day, I was out in the *estran*—that's the area between high tide and low tide—with a group of scientists, many of them retired. They were moving rocks, peering underneath, and for over an hour I just listened to them, laughing, commenting, amazed, like children. They were completely immersed in what they were discovering. I had to use a magnifying tool because I couldn't even see what they were looking at with such fascination.

And in that moment, I felt like I was diving into a world I'd never seen before. It was incredible—just looking under a single rock for an hour, and feeling like I'd traveled to a different country I never knew existed.

Maybe that's what being outside, or "in nature" does for me. It invites me to observe and be amazed. The interactions between species, the beauty, the delicate balances of the ecosystem and the fragility of it.

For me, that's a powerful way to reflect on my own place in the world. As an artist, I think I'm trying to highlight these small, often unseen dynamics—not as a mediator, exactly, but to encourage others to look more closely, to appreciate what's around them. To see that there's intelligence and beauty in what might seem invisible or insignificant.

So... I don't know if that's spiritual. Maybe it is. Probably.

**[Rui]** - Kind of a mandala, perhaps? But it's a discursive practice. Then you have a discursive practice. It's not only...

**[Soazic]** - Not a mandala. It's not a mandala. No, no, no, no.

### A place that I don't fully understand

**[Rui]** - Because this can be another question. Do you have any discursive intentions? So, I pass this to Bruno and Jo. Do you have discursive intentions?

**[Bruno]** - In this work on wolves, I was trying to bring more of a body-to-body relation between people and wolves, here in Barroso, although it's also complex and mediated. I mean, it wasn't just a conflict between shepherds and wolves, there was already the state paying for the hunts. It was already more complex, even in the past.

If I wanted to write an article about this, I would write an article. For me, it's the place of *not understanding completely*, and trying to move into that place I don't fully understand. Not with the intention of clarifying and explaining it all at last, you know?

**[Rui]** --You... you are the kid looking at the pool, right? You are the kid looking at the water puddles. Well, not the water, but the *life* in them, right? Like Soazic—what you're doing...?

**[Bruno]** - Yeah, I can do that, yeah.

**[Rui]** - But are you trying to make sense? Because when I am in that situation of looking at something, I *am* trying to make connections. I'm reasoning about what I perceive.

**[Bruno]** - So... Yes. I think it's hard to avoid this, you know? So, because it's hard to avoid, maybe I'm trying a bit to avoid it. Because this happens. Of course, it happens to me. I think it happens a bit with everyone—depending on the practice, of course.

**[Rui]** - But both you and Jo—Jo, you come from an academic background? You have this kind of training. So, I wonder: exactly where...? Because then, when you bring these things into an exhibition, how do you exhibit this? Are you trying to make us understand what is going on in these relationships between the elements?

**[Bruno]** - Well, in this work with the wolf throats, I

made these reproductions—one-to-one, real size, in metal, in... brass. And I showed them on the floor. I also had a sound piece that I was doing with some musicians from Chaves, also nearby here in the north, a horn quintet. The composition was a collaboration with Laura Marques.

So, there's the sound piece, there are the objects, and there are visual elements, photography. I also collaborated with a photographer, Odair Monteiro. There are some images that I have produced, and material from the research—some texts that I found, shown in a raw mode. It's not an interpretation, I'm not writing an explanatory text. It's not like that. It's just some bibliographic material, small excerpts from texts that explain a bit about what the objects are, but not about what the exhibition *is*. And, also small notes about each object, where I found it, the story of the subject.

**[Rui]** - You let them merge, in a sense.

What about you, Jo?

**[Joanne]** - Well... I mean, as you say, I am from an academic background, and I am an artist-researcher. So, I'm always using creative practices as a way of trying to find something out. And that's always being placed into discourse with the material happenings that I'm engaging with—but also with ideas, and academic and contextual reading, with conversations and more ethnographic, I suppose, types of encounters, you might call them.

But I'm kind of with Bruno. I'm at the stage now where I don't ever want to write an article about a project anymore. Because I don't want to just use written text—and particularly academic text, which I've become more and more frustrated with—to try and explain something which does not have its home in that text. It cannot be explained in those kinds of forms.

So actually, I'm constantly searching for different, new, better ways of being able to somehow represent the kind of thing that Bruno was talking about—where you might have objects in relation to sound, in relation to small pieces of text—that, in their meeting and in their coming together as a set of practices, do reveal something. But that thing does not have to be—I don't think—written in 6,000 words in a journal. I think it's much better represented in different kinds of ways.

And obviously, my work also exists in landscapes. If I make a geo-located sound walk, it then stays within those spaces. And that's a very, it's a very appealing thing. It's like the opposite of what Soazic was talking about, where the beauty is that it disappears. And that's great. It's wonderful to see that act of disappearance—that's part of the practice, and of the artwork.

And for me, part of the practice is knowing that somewhere, there are these technologically encoded, but also materially experienced, pieces of sound in the world that somebody might come along and just encounter. There's something very appealing about that. And that's probably where the research has its best iteration, its best kind of discursive possibility, in a landscape, as opposed to within writing.

I struggle, always, with what are the most appropriate forms—but also, not conceding to the academic discourse as being something which has the tools—which I frankly don't think it does—to be able to account for a lot of this type of work.

**[Rui]** - Trying to write about it, it's like the inverse of the kid which doesn't see before putting the glasses on and suddenly.... It's the inverse. Anyway, this tension between the experience of being in a place and this desire to share, because you all have this ambivalence of this walking, or the experience of being in that surrounding, that unique experience, that is yours and no one else, of being there in this unrepeatable, because it's that moment when you find the berries that you want to come... that desire won't happen again. But simultaneously, you have the desire to show those berries to your peers. How do you live with this? What happens here, while you are performing your existence in the ecological, in the natural setting?

**[Soazic]** - For me, it's something I still haven't fully resolved. When I paint on rocks, the ephemeral nature of the work, its disappearance, is part of the piece. So then the question becomes: should I document it? Sometimes I feel like I should. Other times, it doesn't feel right. And when I do document it—especially through photography—it feels like I'm freezing something that isn't meant to be still. A still image contradicts the essence of the work, which is all about change and impermanence. So

occasionally, I use video instead. I think the video captures it more truthfully—the movement, the rhythm, the fading away. But even then, I don't put a lot of effort into the filming. The experience itself, the moment of creation, is what matters most to me.

If I want to share it with others, I'd rather invite them into that moment, even into the act of creating. I try to see the space not just as a place where I make something, but as a shared space of creation. It's about offering people a way to see, to engage, maybe giving them tools or perspectives that allow them to interact with the elements and be part of something. That, to me, is more meaningful. Because when people participate, when they experience it directly, they begin to question their own relationship with the environment—with nature. And that's where something really interesting can happen.

**[Rui]** - So if a passerby wants to join—or do you invite? How does that happen?

**[Soazic]** - No, not really.... When I'm creating for myself, I really need to be alone. But if I do decide to involve others, then it becomes something planned. In that case, I would organize it in advance—maybe a walk, where I invite people to join.

It's not as spontaneous as when I stumble upon something and start working on the spot. Those moments are very instinctive. When I share a process like this with others, it usually happens afterward, or in a different, more structured way. But that doesn't mean there's no improvisation. There always is, improvisation is part of it. It's just that, in those shared moments, there's a bit more planning involved.

**[Rui]** - But in your improvisation, within your—let's call it a score or procedure.

**[Soazic]** - Improvisation is definitely part of the creative process for me. It's about being open to whatever is happening in the moment and trying to work with it to create something new. Sometimes, as the work evolves, it becomes more deliberate and processed.

The first time I painted on rocks, there was a lot of chance involved in the gesture, and that initial experience held a real magic. As I kept doing it more and more, it naturally became more of a process, a bit more structured.

Those initial magical moments feel very intimate, secretive, and personal. Only when the work evolves into a process, I'm able to share it with others and let them discover that magic for themselves.

**[Rui]** - As we're running late, I've seen your houses turning dark and the lights going on—we're running late. So, last—Bruno and Jo, please, if you have anything to say to these. Otherwise, we'll call it a day.

**[Joanne]** - Yeah, I think I exist with the discomfort in a similar way to what Soazic was describing. Which is: there is an experience that you have that is not something you can give to anybody else, or that they can experience in the same way you have.

There is something in that through which you are exploring, discovering, finding out. And then it's a question of how that might be offered. [Sorry—my cat's in the way]

So the beauty of what I do is that I can invite people to come to a place where I have been, to hear something that I've experienced. And, in a sense, almost be with them—in one form or another—while they experience something which will be related but will probably be very different from what I experienced.

And I think I quite like that. That's what I love about making sound walks: there's this capacity to be with somebody in an asynchronous, remote way, but quite a close way. When you're in somebody's ears, and you're talking to them, and you're singing to them—there is something very intimate about that connection.

But they will be experiencing something in that space that could well be completely different to what I experienced. And yet, there will be some form, I think, of relationality that would emerge from that. That's certainly where I feel the work has its best possibilities—again, in terms of its aims: to explore relationships and to offer different kinds of perspectives and different ways of seeing.

So, yeah, it is always in the spaces and the possibilities of somebody experiencing that work in a particular, specific landscape—or a particular space that might be resonant with one I'm also exploring.

Apart from that, I think it is an unsolvable conundrum. You just have to sit with it.

In terms of trying to share in other kinds of spaces—

—I’m always trying to curate different types of relationships. Whether that’s in an online space, or in a conference presentation, or in a talk—where it might just be possible to at least enact something of that experience, while knowing it will always be partial and never fully account for it.

**[Rui]** - Thank you Jo. This just gave me an idea: we should have a one-hour interview with each of you. Because there are a lot of things I would like to expand.

So, if we don’t get this through, maybe a podcast would be interesting—about this, with you and more people. But okay, let’s keep on.

**[Bruno]** - When I go for a walk—like this one today—I usually get lost at some point. I lose myself. I mean, I know more or less where I am, but I’m not going in the direction I wanted to. I was never brave enough to organize a public walk where I didn’t know the way so well, and I would get lost with people. Maybe one day I will try and do that.

Maybe I would need to make a kind of disclaimer—that this *can* happen. Also, I really like doing night walks. It’s a way of getting a certain focus. It’s easier for everyone to feel like they are in the same rhythm, somehow. There’s a presence that changes with the dark. This is something that I like to do.

I also did a couple of sound walks, and I share what Joanne said: it’s a very intimate distance. You’re in someone’s ear. It’s like whispering.

I really enjoyed the talk. It was great getting to know both your work.

**[Rui]** - I’m happy. I share with you this enthusiasm. It’s a pity this is not longer. But simultaneously, if I had interviewed one by one, we wouldn’t have this flow. I think this vibration worked well.

### 03. To finish

We have composed an ecology of voices—three artists whose distinct practices resonate with one another, each rooted in a shared concern for the body in motion within natural environments. Through walking as both instigation and departure, their work enters into creative dialogue with the surrounding world.

This interview explores how artistic practice can open new ways of seeing—inviting us to attend to what is often overlooked and to step into spaces of ambiguity and unfamiliarity. It highlights the beauty of being in a place where you don’t fully understand, and the invitation to move into that space with curiosity. This act of looking without immediately trying to understand, of observing how something works rather than defining it, opens the door to new types of perception.

Improvisation was emphasized as a fundamental part of the creative process, where the moment takes precedence over fixed results. In these fleeting instances—often secret and deeply personal—something powerful happens: a presence that moves in the dark, a rhythm that is followed, elements that guide the gesture. These moments may be unrepresentable, yet they might reveal the presence of time, pointing toward a deeper temporality.

A recurring theme in the conversation is the beauty of disappearance—not as absence or loss, but as a generative act. There is beauty in the ephemeral, in things that vanish, or that exist only to be encountered unexpectedly, like a fragment of music encoded in technology and rediscovered in another time. Acts such as collecting traces, handling small objects, or working with materials become quiet but potent ways of marking presence, of remembering.

Nature threads through the dialogue—not as a static or romanticized ideal, but as a complex shifting relationship. There is a longing for nature, a call to reintroduce it into the city, and more radically, to collaborate with it. The artists express a desire to be outside not to define, but to witness—to attune the body to what unfolds without demanding clarity. Wildness, they suggest, is not the absence of humans, but a relational concept—always shaped by our cultural and industrial frameworks. Even animals without human contact are not necessarily “wild”; rather, wildness exists in how we relate to the non-human world.

Nature, especially in the countryside, has been industrialized, domesticated. The notion of wilderness - and even practices such as hunting or creating medicinal



totems - were discussed as ways of reconnecting with systems that are deeply intelligent and balanced. It was suggested that by stepping outside ourselves and adopting asynchronous and remote ways of being with others—including non-humans—we could rediscover a whole model of relating: complex, dynamic, and fundamentally interconnected.

Ultimately, the conversation points to artistic practice as a way of rethinking human relations—not through accumulation, but through attention. It is a form of embodied research, where the artist places their body within the world as both subject and tool. Walking becomes a method: to think in solitude, to engage in exchange, or simply to coexist. It is an act of presence, of bearing witness, and of tuning into something greater—something rhythmic, layered, and deeply human.

Here, both body and landscape become archives, alive with stories, gestures, myths, and movements. To walk, then, is to ask what it means to think with the environment—through the body and its senses.

To Caeiro (1946, as cited in Pessoa, 2006), whom we quoted in the epigraph, the lovers never know what, nor why, they love, nor even what love is. Perhaps, similarly, our relationship with nature is an unfolding mystery, never fully grasped, yet essential to who we are. Through walking, storytelling, and artistic intervention, we reconnect with nature not as something separate, but as a living force intertwined with us. This dialogue reminds us that even as landscapes change, our responsibility to them remains. These artistic voices are here to remind us.

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If my father's father's father would read this interview, he would be initially puzzled. But then he would probably say something along these lines:

"The fire is gone, the prayer forgotten, the forest unknown, yet still, the story remains. And with the story, so too does its power. May it continue to guide us, even as the flames fade into memory."

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## Author contributions

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