

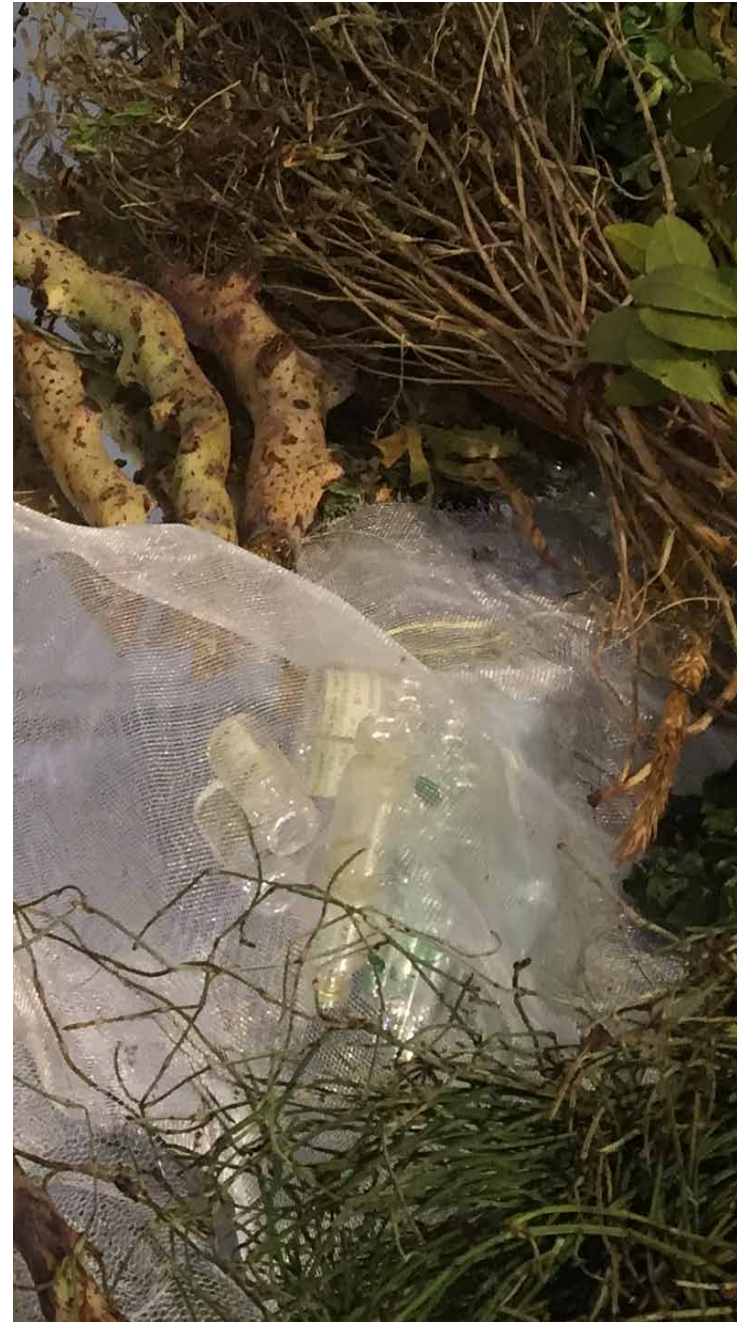
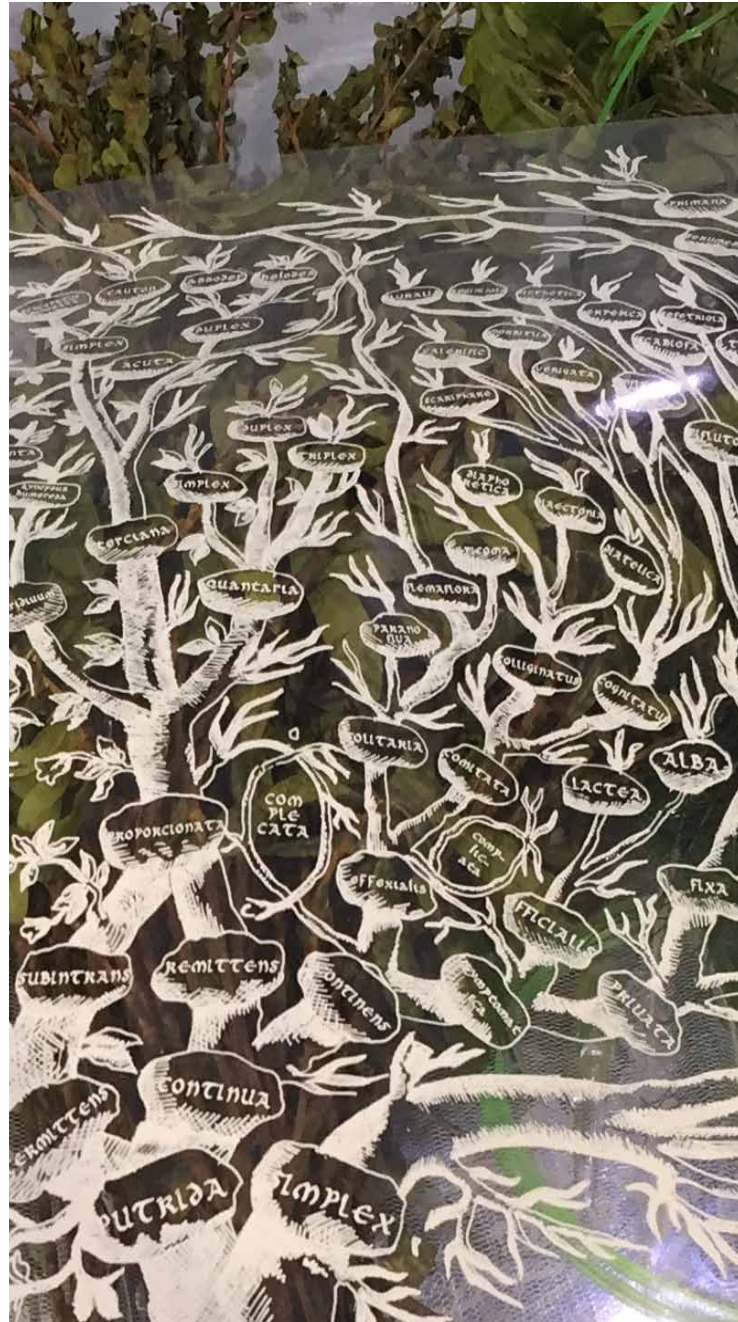
Frágil

Cuenca Biennale

Ecuador 2016

Janet Laurence





Our lives with Plants

The lives of plants form such huge overwhelming mass of systems into which we are totally interwoven and dependant for our own lives.

Their biochemical intelligence is possibly the secret to our survival on the planet.

It underlies the medicinal and transformative capabilities of these brilliant complex organisms that control and affect our being




The Work

Laurence explores impermanence, transparency and opacity within her work for Cuenca. Known for her elegiac installations that address pressing environmental issues, she explores the physiology of medicinal plants from Ecuador and their vital relationship to the human world through this new, site-specific work. A long table supports glass vials, plastic tubing and laboratory equipment alongside locally sourced plant samples, all partially concealed (or alternately revealed) beneath a white fabric veil.

- words taken from *Frágil: Fragilidad*, Rachel Kent, 2016

materials: 14m long table, paper, acetate, duraclear prints, mesh, laboratory glass, plastic tubes, fresh locally sourced herbs

size: 14m x 1m

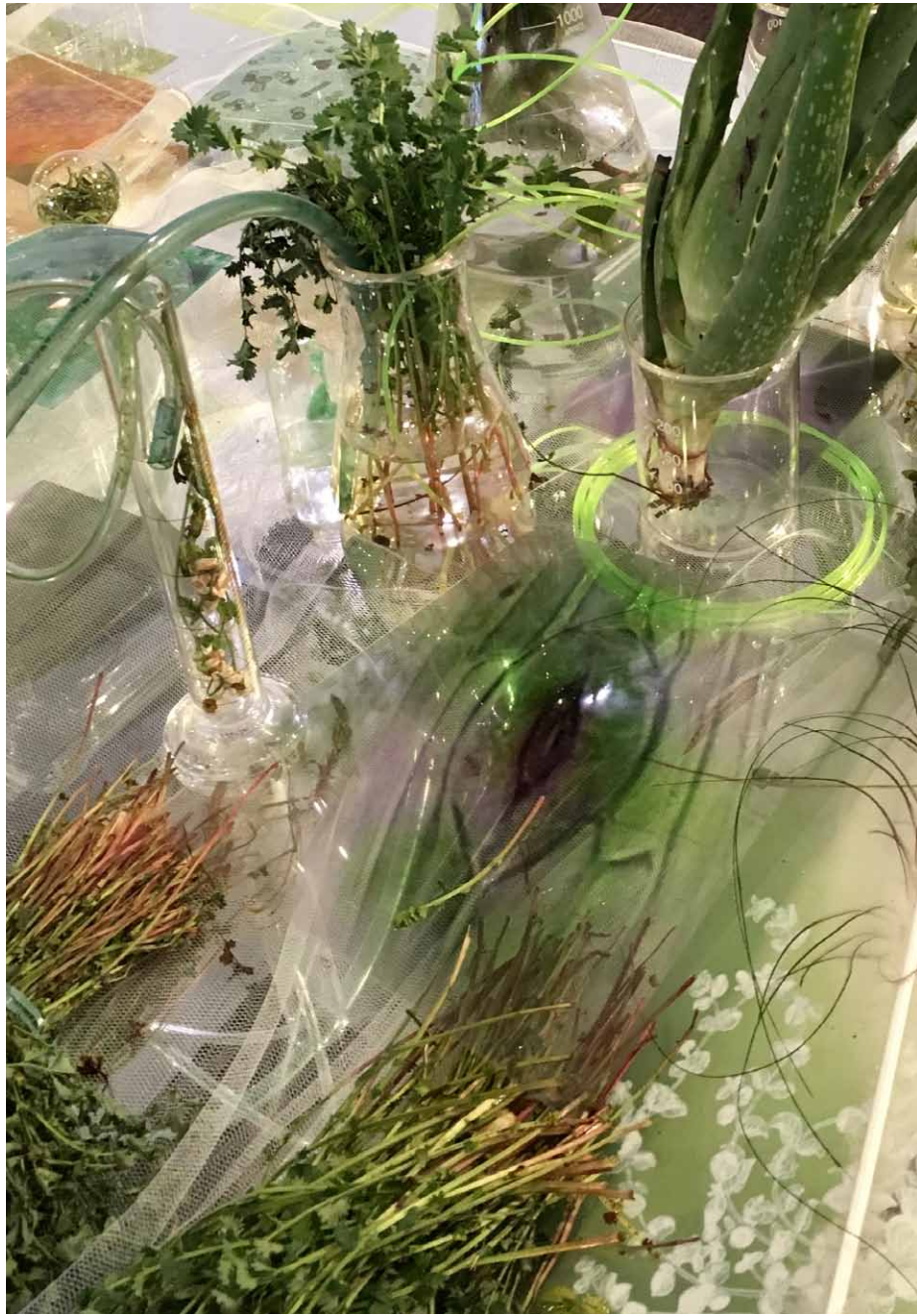


*“With **The Lives of Plants** Janet Laurence (Sydney, 1947) has put together an amazing herbarium with local medicinal species. Their not only intoxicate with their concentrated vegetal scent but also prompt us to think on their therapeutic and magic virtues. But maybe what is most interesting in this exhaustive collection is the fact that -in the same way as the Baroque syntax, made of hyperbaton- the artist combines and confronts the plants with her own presentations, that is, with drawings, prints and illustrations of the plants -appealing both to medieval iconographies and to her own work- Inserting gauzes and fabrics that “protect” the samples and also introducing other objects as lab tubes that refer to their chemical translation, to their pharmaceutical and industrial purposes. This abundance of heterogeneous elements reminds us that the life of plants not only has to do with nature but it is also a cultural and economic fact. It concerns us at an intimate level because our connection with plants is part of our way to respond to our material and spiritual needs, that is to say to our body needs as much as its industrial exploitation meets the commands of the capital.*

-Cristóbal Zapata, “From South to South: Australian art at the XIII Bienal de Cuenca”









Laurences Practice

The imperilled state of the natural world, due to human intervention and catastrophe, is a recurring theme within Laurence's practice. All living things are interrelated, she points out, and if we continue to treat the natural world with disregard, we will impact our own future survival as a species. Recently, Laurence has explored the idea of the hospital as a space for the rehabilitation of plants and ecosystems under threat. The incorporation of laboratory equipment and white gauze in her work suggests a space for healing and resuscitation. Themes of interdependence and equilibrium are brought to the fore, offering a sustainable future if we choose to acknowledge our own fragility and place within the wider scheme of things.

- words taken from *Frágil: Fragilidad*, Rachel Kent, 2016





Working With Herbs - a limpia cleansing

In the ceremony of limpia - cleansing - the patient may sit on a wooden chair below which is a bowl of smoking copal incense. This will purify the patient's body and is relaxing to any spirit intrusions, which are made drowsy by the smoke. As the limpia takes place, the shaman circles the patient, chanting and stoking her body with flowers. The smoking incense eases the passage of the intrusion, which is then caught by and 're-housed' in the flowers. Sometimes an offerenda is also made in thanks for the healing - or to the intrusion for leaving - in which case a gift of some kind may be tied up with the flowers. The whole bundle is then taken into nature and buried so the spirit will not be disturbed and others won't be infected by it.

