

## ***Sustainable practices and cures towards photography and the natural resources used in its materialization.***

### Short Abstract

I advocate for sustainable photography practices in this proposal, rooted in my commitment to ecofeminist principles. My motivation arises from a crucial realization during a prior exhibition, leading to the inception of the project 'Flexió de Xilema.' Here, I explore using locally sourced materials for framing photographs, challenging prevalent extractive practices in contemporary art.

I focus on fostering dialogue across diverse perspectives—urban, rural, academic, and local—rejecting empiricism for a more holistic and sustainable artistic future. Drawing inspiration from Native ways of knowing, I seek to reconnect with traditional practices that value trees as essential to life. By documenting and framing these trees with their own wood, I bring forth interconnected stories of farmers, trees, and my experiences.

This creative process becomes a platform for challenging prevailing oppressive narratives. Emphasizing the power shift in critical thought, I believe in the significance of storytelling and aim to foster inclusivity and hopeful perspectives. The ultimate goal is to initiate change within marginalized communities, often sidelined in conventional scholarly pursuits.

### Long Abstract

The research is grounded in ecofeminist principles and aims to bridge gaps between art, nature, and society. During the process of materialisation of a previous exhibition in 2020 called 'Help Yourself,' which portrayed the business of the exportation of centenar olive trees from my area in Catalonia to the North of Europe, I realised that it made no sense to use exotic materials such as Manzonía wood to frame the photographs. The poor range of woods that the suppliers usually offer made me aware of how little choice photographers have when framing an exhibition and how unrealistic it can be to produce an ecologically sustainable, even dishonest, product when the main topic is environmental matters. I live in a land abounding in fruit farming, surrounded by olive, cherry, almond, or walnut trees; it just makes sense to recycle those no longer productive instead of paying for mass-producing supplies. Thus, I have not framed the photos of that past exhibition. I began to create my repository of local woods, continuing with an ancient practice in my area, asking myself: How do we work with natural resources and rural representations without being extractive? How can the implantation of ecofeminist strategies in art educational programs within the cultural sector —entangled in extractive capitalist regimes— foster more sustainable and ecological forms of production and distribution of the artwork?

The research based on the project 'Flexió de Xilema' seeks to encourage dialogue among urban, rural, academic, and local perspectives by examining how these practices can reshape artistic dynamics and societal behaviours. The proposed investigation opposes empiricism, fostering a holistic and sustainable future through artistic exploration and practice. "In the Western tradition, there is a recognised hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top – the pinnacle of evolution, the darling of creation – and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, humans are often called «the younger brothers of Creation». We say that humans have the least experience with how to live, and this is the most to learn – we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live. They teach us by example. They have been on the earth far longer than we have been and have had time to figure things out." (Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013: 41). 'Flexió de Xilema' is based on the ancient practice of using local trees inland. Not so long ago, in our region, we used to cut down the family tree to celebrate the emancipation of our children. For my grandparents –who were farmers– trees meant shade, food, wood, medicine, protection, tools, and energy, among others. The tree was treated as a subject, witness and link between all generations –present, past and future– as another family member. It is only recently that people have uprooted themselves from the countryside, probably because we think that we no longer depend on its resources since we enjoy a global market.

As a counter practice, I create my repository of local woods by locating dead or dry trees –but not yet in the process of decomposition, as this is of vital importance for local biodiversity– these trees are usually cut down before that state from the owners of the land to make every square meter profitable in the field. Afterwards, agrarians plant a new tree–. These trees are the raw material for creating the frames of all my photographic series. Based on walks and by being in contact with neighbours and farmers, I find these trees, and in collaboration with their owners, I photograph them before I cut them down. Afterwards, I frame the tree's photograph with its own wood. Grateful to the owners, I made an object inspired by their life story –the tree and its owner–. The Seno Walnut tree is portrayed as a stair–chair that serves for the simple and practical life in a farmer's kitchen. We made a musical instrument with Julio from his Agave and his sensitivity for craftsmanship. Nati, known as a woman and a half in my village – due to her famous hard work – gave me an Almond tree from which I created a metric system to calculate the perfect distance for planting vegetables.

With these exercises, I want to rescue the values of what is made by hand, that which is singular and imperfect, objects that show the traces of the worms that inhabited the wood once and word knots that count the years of the tree. Photography in this research connects the farmers, the trees and myself. Through this role play, it is possible to tell their seemingly trifling stories that trace the connection between places, trees and people. Following what Donna J. Haraway says, "It matters what ideas we use to think other ideas (with)" (Haraway, 2016, p. 12), I believe in the power shift that critical thought and education can provoke in society. Including traditional ways of knowing, such as the one I learned in the countryside; for me, scholars are not the only knowledge keepers. I believe that people's storytelling has been the way of learning about life for most people in small

towns like mine - a thousand-people village. If we want to change something in our world, we must begin with the stories we tell each other. In that way, I want to offer stories that can challenge oppressive narratives, such as the superiority of humans over nature and men over women. Furthermore, I aim to foster dialogue, promote inclusivity and give hopeful perspectives for a world where all life forms have the same opportunities to exist and flourish. Starting with marginalised communities like mine, those living in the countryside that have been conventionally overlooked by those who have had the chance to study.