

## Curating disciplinary connections

The covid-pandemic and escalating climate change has highlighted the urgent need to better understand the global impact of human relationships with plants and other animals. Layered and diverse histories of such relationships have brought us to an environmental tipping point. Equally diverse methodologies are required to stage an untangling of these multiple trajectories and identify pivotal nodes. Multi-disciplinary enquiry along with platforms such as curatorship and artmaking, which enable polyphonic narratives to co-exist, hold much potential.

This presentation traces the trajectory of 3 photographic images captured during a series of field trips to the Viikki Plant Sciences Centre, University of Helsinki, in 2023, by an artist-curator. Used in academic papers, conference presentations, performative lectures, teaching sessions, exhibitions, and symposiums, it explores the role of curatorship in setting up a series of relationships between these disciplinary images and other forms of representation (drawn from expanded research fields), as well as their dissemination to diverse audiences. The presentation unpacks how the meaning of the 3 images constantly shift as they are curated and re-curated in different contexts and translated into new forms. It also discusses how curatorship can promote new forms of contact through its use of analogy, suggestion, visual quotation and affect, especially between human and more-than-human worlds.

The larger research project, of which this presentation form part, is titled *Planthology*. It explores plant-human relationships, focusing on plant stress and its escalation due to climate change. Through a series of multi-disciplinary enquiries that engage scholars from diverse fields (researchers from the University of Helsinki Plant Sciences Centre and the History and Philosophy of Science departments; Uniarts researchers and students; as well as Aalto University researchers and students in Contemporary Design), the research examines how curatorship can mobilise scholarly research in the context of the affective, the material, and the visual, and facilitate the dissemination of research that usually occurs in disciplinary silos, to wider and diverse publics. The project consists of a series of fieldtrips, practical curatorial workshops that utilise images and objects drawn from all disciplines represented by the group, as well as a public intervention into the Viikki Arboretum, created by artist-scientist-designer working groups in 2024. In *Planthology*, curatorship therefore applies to the bringing together of people, ideas, and objects.

In tracing the trajectory of the 3 images captured during the initial fieldtrips, through their use in academic papers, conference presentations, performative lectures, teaching sessions, exhibitions, and symposiums, a broader view of the complex and layered trajectory that has led to the current environmental crisis is introduced. This view is expanded on through the inclusion of additional data ranging from the botanical expeditions of the 18th and 19th centuries; the development of systems for categorising and defining the botanical world; the study of material collections such as the pressed herbarium and pinned bark beetle specimen; as well as the tools and apparatus used in the laboratory and the greenhouse; current ethical debates about plants; and novels, films, and popular texts. All of these serve as data that reveal how we understand plants, and become relevant streams of information, when discussing how to secure planetary boundaries, alleviate the harm caused, and promote more caring models of contact.