

Double Bloom(er): An introduction 🌸🌻🌸🌻🌸

Having just completed the first of this series, *Earth Portal* (2022) during my time as a Welcome to My Homepage Resident from December 2021 - February 2022 at The Museum of Human Achievement, I am eager to manifest the second iteration in collaboration with a site that can continue to support the conversations initiated and held by the first. With *Earth Portal* dually acting as a point of origin and departure, the *Double Bloom(er)* series is a developing body of monumental and site-specific Earthworks which emerge as a hybridization of installation, durational performance, critical theory, and experimental documentation. Utilizing the native and abundant old-growth *Opuntia* varieties (commonly known as Prickly Pear cacti), soils, and natural elements such as sunlight, rainwater, erosion, and time as raw material alongside research and self-developed wild-harvesting practices, the cacti are rearranged into ~15' - 20' circles with a single opening for visitors to enter and exit as they experience it.

With varying bloom cycles that fall across the spring and summer months of April - July, native Texas/Mexico cacti are classified as perennials and flower no more than once or twice a year in vibrant shades ranging from fiery yellows and oranges to lush pinks and reds. As the name of the series suggests, the peak of performance on display is counter-intuitively not that which was done by the artist to interrupt the flora and the scenes they occupy, but shifts the focus to center the collaborative new form that the cacti's natural growth and life cycle will lead them into becoming— an immersive ring of spines and flowers to find protection, self, and sensory indulgence within. Additionally and personally informed by my lived non-binary/queer/trans experience of beginning Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) during the same month as this work's creation, the title also contains a shadow reference to the linear hetero-cis-centric “double-puberty” rhetoric imposed on individuals who engage in gender-affirming medical care, or as it is still popularly referred to as, “transitioning”. Simultaneously an intervention on the land as well as a bold inquiry into the theoretical territories of site/place, materiality and agency, ritual/historical practice, and temporality/permanence, these works invite the viewer to participate in and co-explore these “non-binaries” and investigations both collectively and independently throughout their and the works' lifetimes. Rooted in their inherent relationship to site as their place of origin, these works and the concepts that birthed them were initially conceived through an experimental installation titled *TRANSPLANT* (2021) in which I wild-harvested my first cluster of *Nopales / Opuntia Engelmannii* var. *Lindheimeri* (Texas Prickly Pear) from the same Red Bluff Park location. Observed and documented via analog and digital photography processes as well as field-paintings, research, and text reflections, three clusters were selected to be harvested, wrapped, and packed for long-distance travel to their installation site in Richmond, Vermont for the land-art exhibition *Land Chapters* (2021) presented by Artist Field and located in the dense fern-laid forest of rural Richmond, VT where they currently reside and remain cared for today.

While both of these preceding and completed works were constructed from Texas Prickly Pear cacti at Red Bluff Park located in my East Austin neighborhood at the time, future expansions will be resurrected and are intended to exist *in situ* across multiple locations including Austin, San Antonio, the Chihuahuan Desert, Los Angeles, and Mexico with varieties of cacti native to

those specific sites, regions, and ecosystems. Foundationally chosen for their geo-relationality to the historical and ongoing 1960's Chicana *reconquista* land movement-mythology as it has been defined and is colloquially known as, *Aztlán*, these sites were additionally selected to be marked by a physical testimony to the contemporary political tensions and absolute powers that uphold the endless cycles of systematic violence, oppression, and *lucha* which continue to ensnare the lives of many to this day.

Dev/in Alejandro-Wilder, 2022

While the first completed work in this series

As a series and as individuals these works hold conversation with each other as well as the ones they invoke as individuals.

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