



Kyriaki Goni: *Data Garden* at Leeds Arts University

Kyriaki Goni: Data Garden
20 January- 1 April 2023

Kyriaki Goni's *Data Garden* intertwines fiction and scientific facts to propose alternative futures and forms of resistance to climate crisis and surveillance capitalism, in the latest exhibition at Leeds Arts University's Blenheim Walk Gallery.

A *Data Garden* is formed of endemic plants, native to a specific geographical area, the only place where the plant grows naturally. The *Data Garden* exhibition presents the stories of two endemic plants: a hybrid of the Dolomites' indigenous plant *Saxifraga depressa* and the *Micromeria acropolitana*, growing exclusively at the rocky terrain of the Acropolis. The exhibition brings together the two data gardens for the first time as proposition of glocal, eco-technological networks of human and plant life promoting synergy, care, and solidarity.

Prints, videos, interviews with scientists, a sculpture, a polyphonic sound installation, and an Augmented Reality application come together to offer the potential for new insights into multi-layered, socio-eco-technological relationships. *Data Garden* invites us to critically evaluate the climate impact of digital technology with particular focus on the growing demand for data storage and the expansion of data centres' infrastructures. Potential alternative storage solutions are proposed by the artist as imaginaries of a sustainable future.

The mountain islands shall mourn us eternally (Dolomites Data Garden) 2022, presents the latest Data Garden community and a plant; a hybrid of *Ortiseia leonardii*, a conifer fossil 260 million years old, and *Saxifraga depressa*, a rare white flower that grows only on the summits of the Dolomites between 2000 and 2850 meters. The Dolomites, an ecosystem of high plant biodiversity in the Alps, has been recognized as one of the richest areas of endemism; they are also one of the most intensively exploited regions in the world. Excessive development, over-exploitation of land and climate warming necessitate the migration of plant species from lower altitudes to the summits, shifting to new territories in pursuit of more suitable and colder microclimates.

A way of resisting (Athens Data Garden) 2020 focuses on the first Data Garden and the plant *Micromeria acropolitana*, a small and humble perennial species, considered extinct for almost a century until its rediscovery in 2006. Endemic to the Acropolis hill - an archaeological site with more than sixteen thousand visitors per day, human disturbance becomes the plant's greatest threat. Kyriaki Goni takes the species' vulnerability as a point of departure to present a fictional story of a secret community's efforts to preserve plant life and data privacy.

The product of ongoing research into environmental media and networks - as critical frameworks, strategies of resistance and aesthetics - the exhibition comes to Leeds after presentations at the Biennale Gherdëina 2022 (Dolomites, Italy), Onassis Stegi 2020 (Athens, Greece). *Data Garden* is accompanied by a publication edited by Dr Marianna Tsonki and designed by Ashleigh Armitage including a newly commissioned essay by Tom Jeffreys.

Kyriaki Goni: Data Garden runs from 20 January - 1 April 2023 in our Blenheim Walk Gallery, Blenheim Walk building, Leeds Arts University, Leeds LS2 8PH. More information, including full opening hours can be found at www.leeds-art.ac.uk/kyriaki-goni-data-garden

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Press are invited to preview the exhibition on Thursday 19 January, 4.30-7.30pm, Blenheim Walk building, Leeds Arts University, Leeds LS2 9AQ. Please contact marketing@leeds-art.ac.uk if you would like to attend.

Listings information:

Kyriaki Goni: Data Garden

20 January - 1 April 2023, Monday to Saturday 10-4pm
Blenheim Walk, Leeds Arts University, Leeds LS2 9AQ
www.leeds-art.ac.uk/kyriaki-goni-data-garden

Preview & Panel Discussion: Thursday 19 January 2023

4:30-5:30pm Panel Discussion (Auditorium)
5:30-7:30pm Preview (Blenheim Walk Gallery)
Leeds Arts University, LS2 9AQ
No booking required.

Image: The mountain islands shall mourn us eternally (Dolomites data garden), video still 2022. Kyriaki Goni.

Leeds Arts University

Founded in 1846 as the Leeds Government School of Art and Design, Leeds Arts University has contributed significantly to the development of art education in Britain and across the world. In 2016 the University was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and in 2017 was awarded full university status, making it the only specialist arts university in the North of England.

Leeds Arts University has been recognised for its industry-standard facilities at the Whatuni awards (winners in 2019 and 2016, runner up in 2020), and was announced winner for Student Support in 2020. In 2021 Leeds Arts University appointed acclaimed musician Skin to the role of Chancellor.