

the green lawn ~ as a white cube  
its gardener ~ as an artist  
its flowers ~ as objects, nurtured  
to be walked around and adored

Interviews with the garden owners  
at Landlyst Plantecenter 2022  
Curated by Skal Contemporary  
Photo: Rikke Ehlers Nilsson  
Graphic: Urwelcome



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VI ER HER  
på jorden

## Only here to adore

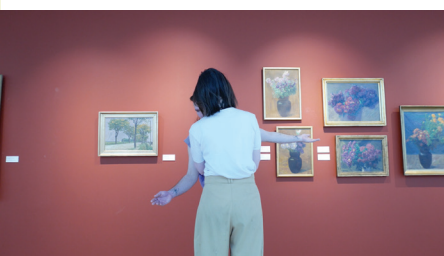
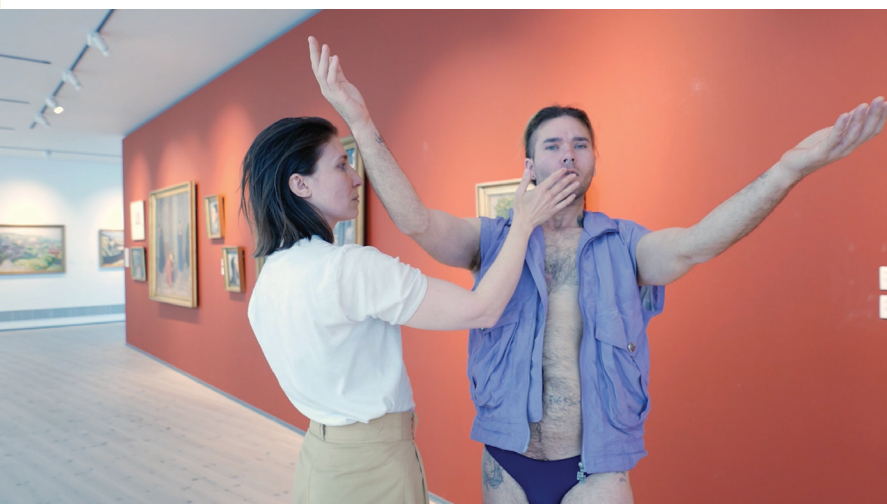
*Only Here to Adore* is a video-piece made from two phases of research and artistic choreographic interactive explorations. The first research took place at Landlyst Plantecenter, a plant nursery outside Hjørring. During the spring of 2022, I interviewed visiting garden owners about the plant they were there to buy. About how they might envision its place and appearance in the garden? And if they could describe to me in detail how they would interact with it in order to make it grow in accordance with their wish? Sometimes the interview turned into a conversation about the project and how I was trying to understand gardening through my own love of imagining and composing.

Together with dancer Nathaniel Moore and visual artist Louise Ørsted Jensen behind the camera, we spent three days listening to my interviews whilst moving around the spaces of Vendsyssel Kunstmuseum. The museum exhibits works by artists from Northern Jutland. Many of them show the region's vast and lonely-looking landscapes. Their portraits of fields with tree lines blown crooked by the hard western winds of its high coast served as a visual contrast to the interview stories about the small protected gardens we were enacting.

I assumed the position of the gardener, Nathaniel that of the plant. Not as a 1:1 mimicking of the two and the stories we heard, but as a gradual translation of how the gardener treated the plant into a movement-based abstraction of the interactions. The process of finding the score for each interaction worked as a mode of analysis. One which in a lot of ways resembles how I was taught as a sociologist to code qualitative material and then conceptualise general *ideal types*. On the second day the features of five types of gardening started to emerge.

Stills from video: Only Here to Adore  
Vendsyssels Kunstmuseum 2022  
Curated by Skal Contemporary  
Photo: Louise Ørsted Jensen





## Gardening as aesthetic composition

*Score for interaction:* Starts with a visual aesthetic assessment of where to place the plant. Looking at colours and shapes first to gain the overall picture which the plant will become a part of. Treating the plant according to how I want it to grow as a visual image.

*Plant archetype:* The rose. That which requires a lot of attention in the form of almost daily cutting and monthly fertiliser in order not to be overtaken by rust spots. The rose has no other purpose in the garden other than to be adored.

*Interview example:* A garden owner who has picked a plant whose soft faded red flower pedals will match the red tiles of her house. She only ever buys flowers of pale red, rose-coloured, white or purple. She puts the bush in a big pot, which enables her to move it, should she want to later change its position.

*Notes from the interaction:* When in this mode of gardening I feel a desire for seeing and creating images. As a gardener, my desire to make the plant grow in a specific way will create quite an intimate relation. Shaping and forming the plant in accordance with my wishes requires a certain knowledge of it.



*Score:* Warm-up to create a physical state of looseness in the body and loss of immediate intentions. Exercising randomness and starting processes without knowing its outcome. Watch what happens and support it whilst trying NOT to interfere nor getting attached to what was there, when it starts to disappear.

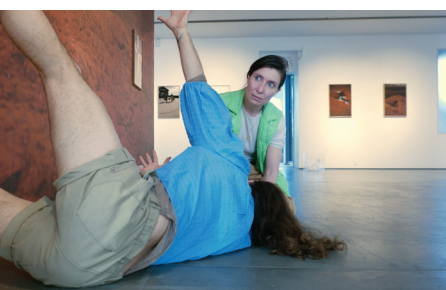
*Plant archetype:* One growing where winds and rains deposited it.

*Interview example:* A small family had recently bought a house with land belonging to it. Now they were in the process of letting most parts of it grow wild. She, who was educated and had worked as a forrester, told me of how they watch what is coming, what disappears and what remains. Once a plant seems a more steady part of the environment, she might do more thorough research to see how she can support it. They sometimes plant something, but without thinking too much about it or getting sad if it fails. Failure and accepting the ways of nature is part of what they practise in their efforts to rewild the land.

*Notes from the interaction:* It feels very difficult not to intervene. This means most of the work is an internal philosophical exercise of introspection and practice of restraint. To eventually welcome death.

## Gardening as re-wilding (an existential exercise)





*Score:* Seeking immersion and comfort from Nathaniel's body. Touch for the sake of sensing the softness of small hairs on his arms and legs. Smelling the shampoo in his hair. Finding ways to let him hold my weight. Finding points of balance to relax into him. To let his calm pace come into me.

*Plant archetype:* Lavender.

*Interview example:* A younger woman who was there to buy a lavender plant. She was going to have it on her new balcony and wanted it to become part of a cosy world for her and her friend to sit in. She imagined she would sometimes rub it between her fingers in order to activate the smell and amplify its calming effect on her. She did not know much about the plant. But in case it would start to look droopy she would perhaps google and find out if there was something she could do for it.

*Notes from the interaction:* I understood this type of gardening very well. It was perhaps the most similar to how I (as a decidedly urban person living in the countryside) actually garden myself. Sometimes I felt myself turn into a clown in my constant search for comfort. Having found a spot and starting to rest into it, Nathaniel's slow but steady movement would shift and I would end up in an awkward position and sometimes fall. Even if the interaction was entirely for me, I felt less in control than in many of the other modes of gardening.

## Gardening for inner state

## Gardening for the social gaze

*Score:* Searching for what feels presentable to the visitors of the museum. Finding a spot in the space that looks pleasant / or will not disturb anyone. Push and pull the body when necessary. Doing no more than what is needed. Removing dirt. Moving what moves out of place. Moving with the knowledge of having done this very same action for decades.

*Plant archetype:* The shrub that grows into a solid carpet.

*Interview example:* An elderly woman who was there to buy Pansies for her mother's grave. They are good, she told me, because they look nice and they don't need much attending to. They come back year after year.

She also told me about her garden at home. She recently cut down a bush with her son. Once every seven years it has to be cut down in order to grow back nicely. She prefers plants and bushes that do not need too much work. At the same time she would never miss the moment the garden needed work done to it. The small garden in front is the most important. It needs more work than the backyard, because she respects her neighbours and wants a tidy street.

*Notes from the interaction:* In this interaction I did not find desire, but a certain kind of care and satisfaction in creating something which felt presentable. It was an unsentimental relation to Nathaniel. As this type of gardening also has the kind of cut lawns I find to be problematic, I made an extra effort to emphasise with the wish to create something presentable to my surroundings.





## Gardening to support a universe

*Score:* Starting by listening into Nathaniel's body. Into his breath. Sensing into the movement of his muscles and to where they seemed to pull or gravitate towards. Then looking around into the space to find out how it was either supporting him / or he was beginning to support the space. Sensing how he felt the light. Moving with him towards it if it felt good. Or covering his eyes if the museum lights seemed too bright.

*Plant archetype:* Perennials.

*Interview example:* A woman was in the nursery with her son. They were there to buy a herb, whose scent might eventually distract insects from a fruit tree. At the same time, its scent was meant to amplify and become part of the garden, which she thought of as a small immersive universe. She told me about the process of researching, observing and learning which comes with perma-gardening.

*Notes from the interaction:* With this one Nathaniel felt a sense of relief. Even if the other interactions had been interesting to explore, this one came close to how he engages with relations in his private life. I felt it too. It was a moment of relaxation to let go of directing - and starting to follow, watch, support and learn about the body - and through it, the space.

However, this type was the most difficult to make in the art museum. The white cube – like the sun kings' garden – makes objects of what you put into it. In this way, it was perfect as a setting for gardening as aesthetic composition. This type would need a more immersive performance space, where lights could be dimmed, fabrics could be pulled, smoked scent could be blown and with more bodies as plants there to lean on each other.

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Inga Gerner Nielsen: The concept of *only here to adore* began to unfold as I was watching a TV program about a local initiative to turn private gardens into a vital focus of preserving biodiversity in Hjørring.

At first, the resistance displayed by some citizens to simply allowing their gardens to grow baffled me. But by applying the analogy of garden maintenance as adoration and connection with its flora, I softened a bit.

The performance-reflections from the garden continued in the gallery of SKAL Contemporary in spring 2022.

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*only here to adore* was curated by SKAL Contemporary, an exhibition space for contemporary art located in Skagen.  
[www.skalcontemporary.dk](http://www.skalcontemporary.dk)

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