

About Earthlife

EARTHLIFE is a moving and morphing exhibition. This show collects together artists and researchers whose work addresses the themes, insights, and practices of restoration ecology and regenerative agriculture. Nature learns quickly, even as she is colonized and suppressed in her expressions. The EARTHLIFE project invites us to “tune-in” to the volition of the land, to the living EARTHLIFE, and to practice our millenia old human talents to notice, to facilitate and to accompany healing and succession. This is an intertwining of human will with the many other wills, self-willed land and self-willed other species. The show collects land art, land use innovations, land healing actions, land cherishing legacies and ritual spaces, land traditions, intimate land knowledge, premonitions, and future feelings — these are the vocabularies we wish to explore together.

We acknowledge that the material wealth created in this country has come at tremendous cost to the country itself, the living landscapes, peoples and other species indigenous to this place. As we go together towards a long future for life on earth, we bear the consequences of a history full of disastrous land use decisions. The biological and cultural abundance of the “so called wild” lands managed by indigenous peoples resulted from millennia of applied insights, controlled burns, selections, rituals and choreography in togetherness. The architecture and cultural identity of our rural communities, our forest people, our fisher people, our cave and mining peoples — each in their way holds a trauma of conquest and the over-powering and simplification of natural resource economies.

In an age we humans like to emphasize as ours: our Anthropocene, our common plight, we are none the less immersed in a pulsing, twinkling tapestry of EARTHLIFE. Just as the power of a river cannot be captured by a dam, neither can the digital internet contain the breadth and depth of information flowing through our complex living planet. It is so much bigger than we can ever grasp, this distributed volition cannot be controlled by a few elites or corporate server farms. When we step off the sidewalk, we become entangled in inter-trophic transmissions, sensing and co-depending, scruffy and successional ecologies, full of emergence and feedback loops. In reminding ourselves about the genius and momentum of EARTHLIFE we are thankful for artists and tellers that transmit, transpose and entrance us, that remind us to tune in, open up, and chip in.

Earthlife Organizers

Renée Rhodes makes performative walking tours, crowd-sourced memories of lost landscapes & somatic practices for humans looking to relate to their home ecosystems. These gestures realize themselves through video, performance, installation, gardening, and writing. For the past 5 years Renée has placed an emphasis on learning to farm and in ecological restoration projects. She grows native plants in her backyard and is a steward at various non-profits throughout California. Renée has also shared her creative work at B_tour Festival in Berlin, at Guesthouse in Cork, Ireland, on a Signal Fire Residency in the Mt. Hood, Oregon wilderness, at Southern Exposure in San Francisco, Di Rosa in Napa Valley, and also the Headlands Center for the Arts where she was an Affiliate resident artist. In 2022, she will be a resident at Lucid Art Foundation during their year of climate change exploration.

Severine runs Smithereen Farm, a MOFGA certified farm in Washington County, Maine, where she harvests wild blueberries, wild algae, and raises gardens, herbs, bees, shiitakes and livestock on a diversified operation down by the seashore. Severine is co-founder and board president of Agrarian Trust, which recently won the US Food Sovereignty Award for its work preserving a farm in common called “Little Jubba Commons” to be leased on a 99 year basis to the Somali Bantu community in Maine. More than 1600 Mainers contributed to the land purchase, but there are many more farms to go! Severine also runs Greenhorns, a 13 year old organization that publishes the NEW FARMERS ALMANAC, a literary journal written by and for the young farmers movement. Greenhorns have a campus in Pembroke, Maine with a research library, where they undertake film and radio production and educational programming to support the incoming generation of agroecologists. Severine’s passion for wild seaweed has spilled over into a new project called www.seaweedcommons.org In 2020, Greenhorns began an artist in residence program at @ReversingHall in Maine, and look forward to continuing our agrarian studio alongside a growing community of artist collaborators. Come visit.



www.greenhorns.org

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Earthlife

GOSPEL FLAT FARMSTAND GALLERY

140 Olema-Bolinas Road
Bolinas, California

February 1–21, 2021
10am–3pm daily

ARTISTS

Futurefarmers
San Francisco

The Great Imagining™
London

Rose Marasco
Maine

Rick Prelinger
San Francisco

Sexto Colectivo + ALMA
Mexico City



Organized by Greenhorns
(Severine von Tschärner Fleming and Renée Rhodes)

Artists

SOIL PROCESSION

Amy Franceschini, Futurefarmers

Soil Procession was one of several public programs enacted in the lead up to the establishment of the permanent public art project, Flatbread Society in Oslo, Norway.

On June 13, 2015 a procession of farmers carried soil from their farms through the city of Oslo to its new home at Losæter, by the Oslo fjord. Soil Procession was a GROUND BUILDING ceremony that used the soil collected from over 50 Norwegian farms from as far north as Tromsø and as far south as Stokke, to build the foundation of the Flatbread Society Grain Field and Bakehouse.

At high noon, farmers gathered at the Oslo Botanical Gardens joined by city dwellers. Tractors, horses, wagons, wheelbarrows, musical instruments, voices, sheep, boats, backpacks and bikes processed to Losæter where the farmers' soil offerings were laid out upon the site and a Land Declaration was signed.

The procession of soil and people through Oslo drew attention to this historical, symbolic moment of the transition of a piece of land into a permanent stage for art and action related to food production. This action drew attention to new audiences and garnered the attention of the Norwegian Farmers Union and the minister of agriculture which resulted in an ongoing partnership to fund a full time "city farmer" at the site.

Futurefarmers is a group of diverse practitioners aligned through an interest in making work that is relevant to the time and place surrounding them. Founded in 1995 they collaborate with scientists and are interested in scientific inquiry,

they want to ask questions more openly. Through participatory projects, they create spaces and experiences where the logic of a situation disappears. Futurefarmers use various media to create work that has the potential to destabilize logics of "certainty." Futurefarmers work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New York Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim, MAXXI in Rome, Italy, Sharjah Biennale, Taipei Biennale, Henie Onstad Museum, Oslo, New York Hall of Sciences, and the Walker Art Center.

MAINE GRANGE HALLS

Rose Marasco

Grange Halls represent a crowning achievement of small town Maine farming communities, many of whom ceremonially burned their mortgage to proclaim independence for their gathering place. The Grange was a center for rural education, social life, and lectures that transmitted the family-farm political economy of the populist movement in the 1890s and with another surge in membership in the 1920s and 1930s. All around the country these Granges, and the family farms that built them have been declining in prosperity.

Rose Marasco set out to catalog the Grange Halls of Maine, which as a state has the highest per capita Grange membership in the USA. The faded drapes and empty chairs in her photographs bear testimony to the hollowing out of small towns and small farms in favor of extractive monocultures elsewhere, unseen. While many of the farmers' fields have grown back to forestry, the Grange Halls remain, mostly, waiting for the next generation of users to come and revive their function, to bring back the beating heart of these small towns and hamlets.

FARMS LOST AND FOUND

Rick Prelinger and Prelinger Library, in collaboration with Greenhorns

The history of 20th-century farm life in America comes alive in home movies. The introduction of 8mm cameras and film in 1933 made home movie-making affordable for many rural families, and thousands picked up cameras to record the rhythms and activities of daily life and special events on the farm and in the towns. This project seeks to collect, digitize, compile and redistribute home movies made by farmers and shot on farms between 1925 and 1980. Its two main objectives: to build a publicly accessible archives of historical farming footage documenting farm life and the working of the land, and use this material to present compiled programs in front of live audiences who will be encouraged to talk their way through the material — to identify and explain places and practices, ask questions of each other, and compare past, present and future.

The period between 1925 and 1980 coincides with a profound period of change for American agriculture, when mechanization, market forces and federal policy conspired to transform these farm families' relationships with the landscape. The archives of home movies we rescue from indifferent storage in basements and attics will comprise a veritable encyclopedia of farming techniques and rural life, and serve as a practical repository for today's agrarians occupying many of the same landscapes as their forebears. We seek to use these films to encourage today's agrarian futurists to study and emulate lost techniques worthy of revival, to show (among many other things) traditional building techniques and feeding practices, visible diversity of the meadows and non-chemical management of

fencerows, what farmers wore while working and celebrating, and the continuities and differences between farm life in the past and today.

This series was instigated by Rick Prelinger, longtime moving image archivist, writer, filmmaker, film professor at UC Santa Cruz and (with Megan Prelinger) co-founder of Prelinger Library, longtime collaborator with the Greenhorns. After presenting 18 urban history programs (produced principally with home movies) between 2006-2015 in San Francisco, Oakland, Detroit and Los Angeles, Rick sought a way to bring this participatory community history method to rural audiences and to explore the rich archives of images showing the working landscape in collaboration with motivated (and vocal) audiences. In 1991 Rick presented two hours of rediscovered amateur film footage shot in 1938-39 in Britton, South Dakota. The audience recognized their relatives and themselves at cornhusking bees, cattle auctions and holiday celebrations. In 2016 he showed the version you see here at Agrarian Trust's OUR LAND symposium in Santa Fe. Since that time Rick's been convinced that historical moving images can be the kernel of intense community-building experiences, especially when audiences are actively involved.

Home movie camera-people documented almost every event and activity in mid-20th-century America. Rich in emotion and evidence, the surviving body of home movies constitutes an infinitely varied encyclopedia of people, places and activities, often spontaneous and unrehearsed. There are home movies from every state, town and neighborhood; films of homefront America during foreign wars; films shot at churches, schools and city halls; films of county and state fairs,

cattle auctions, and harvests; films of trains and cars going by; films of housewives, heroes and hoboes. Home movies are the most vivid evidence of the contours of daily life, the appearance of our homes and workplaces and the body language of earlier generations. Our goal is to create a collection and presentation from a relatively short period of American family farm life of the 1920's-1980's covering two distinct periods of prosperity and crisis. The film created as a familial archive makes for tender portraits of a past-present.

Now, in 2021 we sit ' between the generations' where more than 70% of American farmland is owned by people in their 70's. We have reached a demographic inflection that brings with it a huge loss of knowledge, experience and also family land-ownership. Farmers alive today remember horses on the landscape, and often cared for those animals as children. They remember eating from their own gardens and seeing a large family supported by a far smaller landbase than is possible today. US Farm policy of the period studied has incentivized gigantism and corporate scale production of commodities instead of diverse small, medium farms. Today' entering farmers and farmworkers face daunting economic prospects to afford a farm purchase, or to support their family only with farm income. This is a poignancy we must confront as private equity, agri-tech and 'decarbonization finance' plows their way into rural America alongside the local foods movement.

Finding a way to talk about the cultural, and political impacts of these disorienting trends is challenging, but we think home-movies are a good way in. Through the memories and memorabilia of the generation of farmers who bore

witness-- we can remind a bigger audience of a farming-life they may never have seen before with hedgerows, proud barns, vital and prosperous small-town life with shops and services and ambition, even the glossy good health of animals, and vegetated streambanks and rivers are viewable. This is not nostalgia, it is the living history of the land. If you know of archival footage, VHS tapes, audio cassette tapes, floppy discs, DVDS, super 8 or any other format of farm home movies, that you would like to see digitized, please be in touch. We are able to do this digitization for free and thanks to the generosity of the Internet Archive are able to host the resultant materials at www.archive.org. For more information about this project, or to help bring it to a Farmers Union, Grange Hall, rural network or historical society near you, please reach out! severine@greenhorns.org

THE GREAT IMAGINING™

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