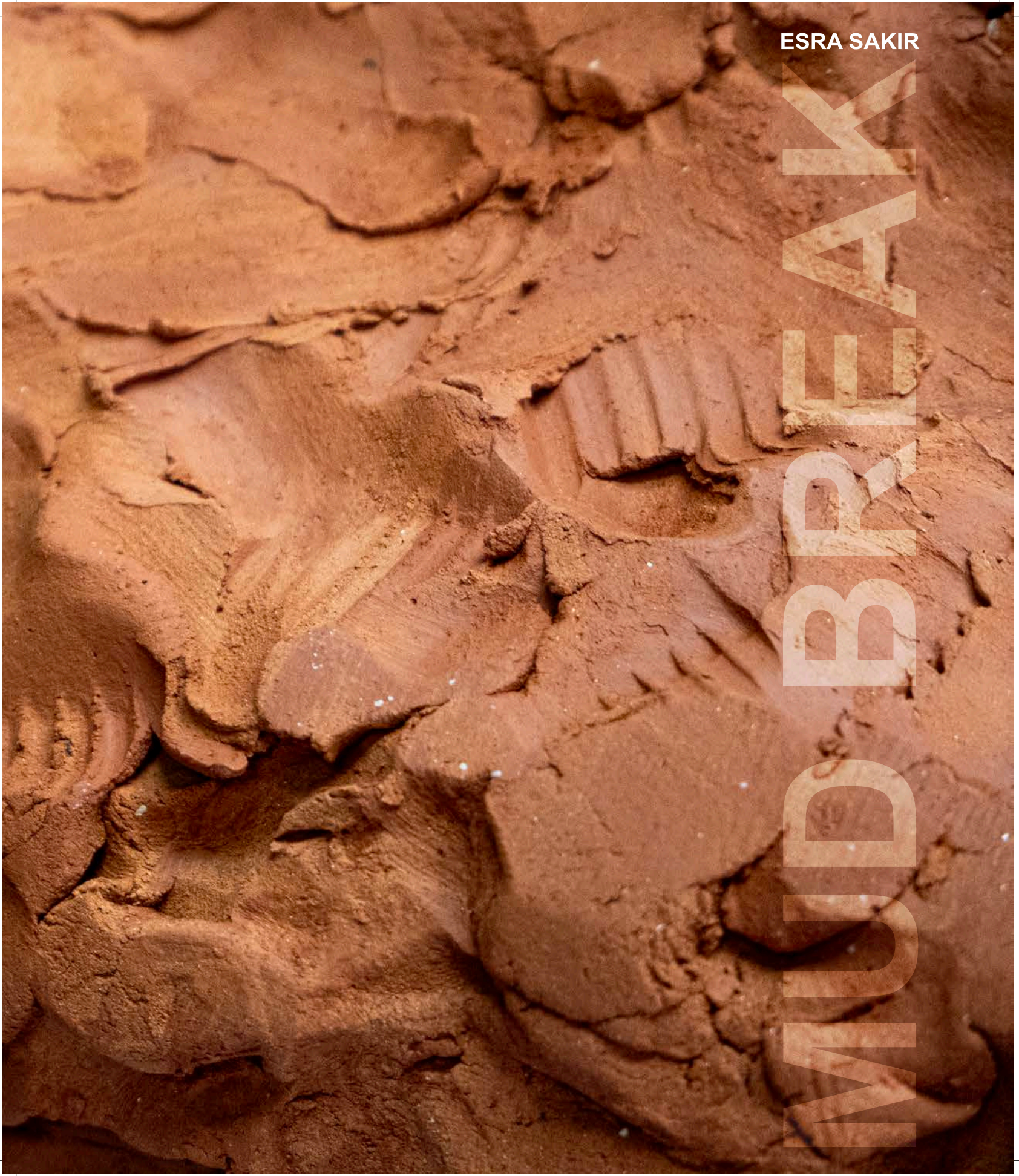


ESRA SAKIR

MUD BREAK





A Graceful Fall,
Esra Sakir 2024,
Lutkemeerpolder clay
23x19,5x22 cm

MUD BREAK

By Esra Sakir

A project in collaboration with Waag Futurelab and
Voedselpark Amsterdam

Introduction

At the westernmost edge of Amsterdam you'll find the Lutkemeerpolder: an area of 68 hectares with a long history of providing food for the capital. However, two thirds of the area (43 ha) have been designated as industry, meaning that the fertile, agricultural land is being bulldozed and distribution centers are being built, extinguishing the social and ecological value of the Lutkemeerpolder for the city. Voedselpark Amsterdam (Food Park Amsterdam) aims to protect and maintain the land for food production by envisioning an agro-ecological landscape in commons governance, where farmers can produce affordable and sustainable food, knowledge is exchanged and there is space for local initiatives and social activities.

Waag Futurelab and Voedselpark Amsterdam asked Esra Sakir to become artist-in-residence for the period March - June 2024, with the question to research the relationship of the Nieuw-West neighbourhood to the local ecology, economy and to food. She did so by bringing our attention to the fertile ground of the Lutkemeerpolder which is besides food production also uniquely suited to clay work. She organised several workshops in the Nieuw-West neighbourhood and guided locals and clay lovers alike through the process of creating their own piece of art using clay directly harvested from the Lutkemeerpolder, building tangible creations and intangible connections throughout the neighbourhood. During the workshops she also encouraged people to think about their vision and dreams for the Lutkemeerpolder, which can be incorporated in the future plans of the Lutkemeerpolder.

This catalogue showcases the clay of the Lutkemeerpolder as shaped by the people that came into contact with it over the past few months as facilitated by Esra Sakir. Throughout her residence and beyond, Esra has championed the artistic potential of the natural clay from the Lutkemeerpolder, a heretofore unknown resource of rare quality for The Netherlands, reminiscent of the volcanic soils of Italy. Through her clay workshops she established the ability of Food Park Amsterdam to be more than a place of food production; a creative hub with multiple functions and values based on the needs of the people of the Nieuw-West neighbourhood. Esra also drew new crowds to the Lutkemeerpolder, who were interested from an artistic perspective and came from far and wide to work with the local clay. During the workshops Esra brought everyone together through food sharing practices, building an international community of clay lovers with strong ties to the Lutkemeerpolder. The works shown in this catalogue are only the start.



















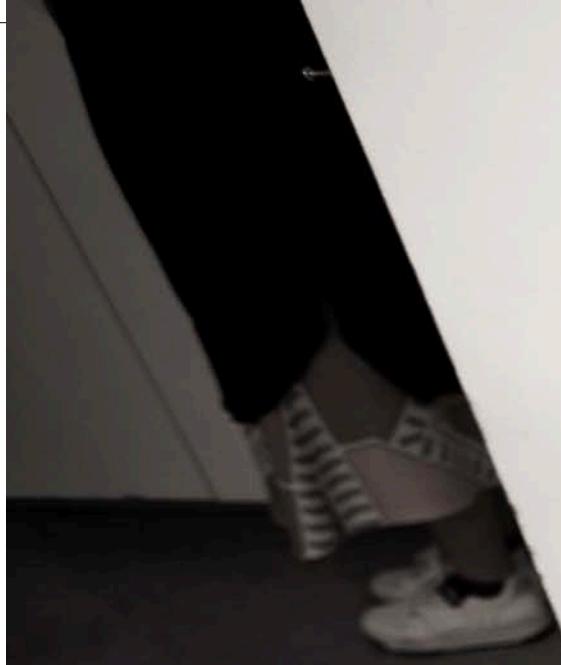


ce

ESITIVA una bella
da proporre a



STRENESE
GABRIELE STREHLE





cena da marinaio

ESCLUSIVA Una salsina, una pasta e un pesce di mare. Il risultato, alle mani e alle forche, da gustare agli amici in casa o in vacanza. Alle mani e alle forche, da gustare agli amici in casa o in vacanza.



OCEANI
PIÙ OSSIGENO, MENO VITA?

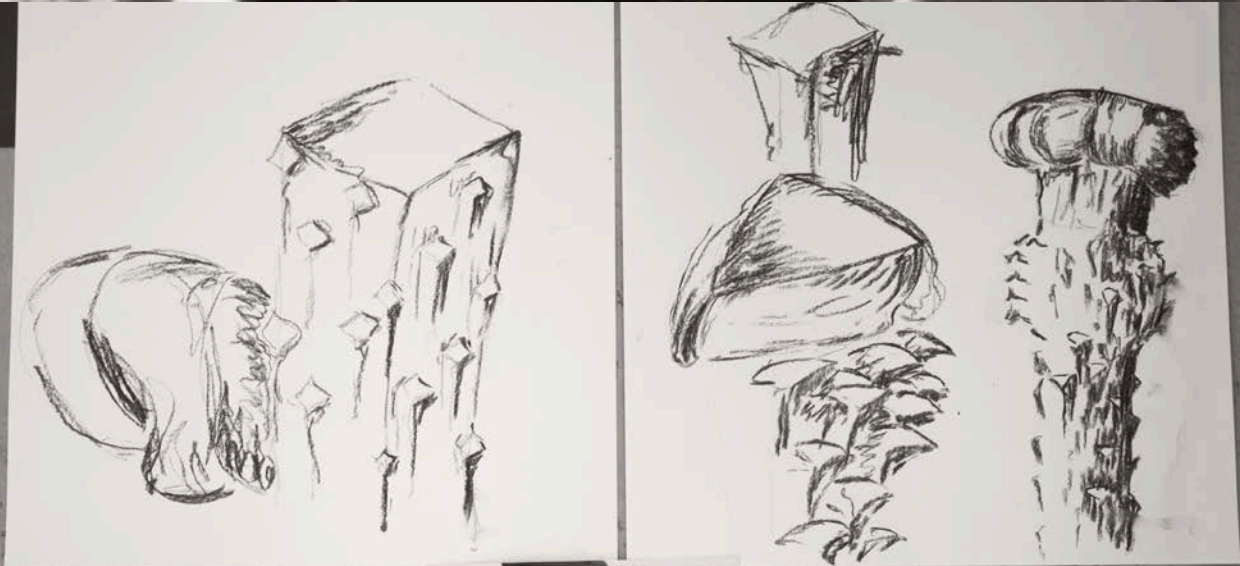
Il fitoplancton espone l'anidride carbonica e produce l'80% dell'ossigeno che respiriamo. Un ciclo "perfetto" di cui, per un misterioso motivo, non si parla mai. E il suo corso è affrettato. Ma le ultime ricerche rivelano che il ciclo è in bilico. E che il fitoplancton potrebbe scomparire. Per questo, gli scienziati stanno studiando i modi per salvarlo.



L'immagine è stata tratta da un'opera di arte di Marina Abramovic, 1998. L'opera è conservata al Museo d'Arte Moderna di New York.









Most Urgent Humanitarian Concern: Climate Change and Environmental Disasters

The biggest problem of our time is human distancing from nature. Our estrangement from nature has led to the forgoing of some knowledge and the loss of sensitivities. The concerns we have regarding climate change and environmental crises not only create natural disasters but also give us neurological problems such as fear for the future, constant stress, and aggressive behavioral issues. We feel more and more the necessity to reconnect, to trust, and to feel in harmony with ourselves, other humans, and non-humans, being part of a whole.

Our life quality may be improved by changing our own daily consumption habits. This knowledge remains theoretical, but changing learned behaviours is very difficult. We could change our daily habits, change our way of thinking and redefine the content of ethical concepts. We are aware of the necessities at an intellectual level, but we need examples and practices to implement them. Working physically with the soil may be a starting point to practice and translate the intellect into experience. Reflections and knowledge experienced through a sensorial bodily practice become more personal and long-lasting values. Working with our hands in the clay is a process to build this sensorial relation with the earth, to reset our mind, to motivate our creativity and to experience oneness between humans and non-humans. The work of clay, starting with the soil is a practice to reflect on and to understand the importance of biodiversity for our collective existence and continuation of the life.

Importance of Clay as a Connecting and Healing Medium

Ceramics are an important medium that slows down time, provides the discipline to consider the needs of the earth, and helps us rediscover our personal connection with it. It fulfils a strong urge to reconnect with nature, which is possible through the relationship we establish with the soil. Earth, fire, water, and air are traditionally the first fundamental elements. Practicing and reflecting on basic materials bring us emotionally to the basics.

The right combination of these elements leads us to the process of ceramics as fired earth. As a creative person in all phases of the process you need to keep your sensorial perception and feelings alert. You need to align the breath with the clay to come to a desired end. This process helps us to build an empathetic relationship with the soil.

Art historical heritage is a very important component of my artistic creation, and for the workshops, I always try to give a personal reading, emphasizing the role of nature representations and the relationship between humans and nature. Visually, the images I use in my work and during classes are derived mostly from Asia Minor, Hittite, Egyptian, Persian, and Assyrian sources. These combine the formation of divine concepts and the merging of animal and human bodies to create the idea of supremacy. Figures of the Great Goddess, matriarchal traditions, and the Artemis of Ephesus are the starting points in my work. The concept of Mother Earth allows us to give identity to the earth, establishing closeness by identifying it with humans. Earth gives life like a woman; the better we take care of it, the more abundance it provides. Time is not only forward-focused; highlighting the common characteristics of communities throughout history and emphasizing the wisdom of ancient peoples in human-nature relationships hold an important place in my work. This approach, with its unifying aspect of historical reading and a perspective from the biodiversity point of view, resonates with me. I share these images as inspirational samples to challenge the creativity of clay lovers and to motivate them to reflect on the role of non-humans in history from a biodiversity perspective.

Why were workshops used during this residency?

Ceramic workshops are my initiative to share my experiences and views as a visual artist. Sharing knowledge and thoughts, thinking together, doing things together, getting to know each other, and forming a new community of like-minded individuals are important to me. My assignment during this residency program was to find correlations between conscious food consumption and the soil. The starting point for me is to establish a personal connection through a tactile, hands-on experience. Digging into the earth with bare hands, feeling the difference between layers of soil, and understanding these differences is the first step to having a deeper dialogue with the material.

This interaction with the soil is not just a physical activity but a meaningful encounter with the history and memory embedded within it. The soil of Amsterdam, particularly in places like the Lutte-meerpolder, holds a unique story that resonates with the city's broader narrative. By engaging directly with this soil, I counteract the disconnection that often arises in urban environments, where nature and its resources can feel distant or abstract. Feeling the soil's texture, understanding its composition, and recognizing its vitality allows me to bridge that gap, fostering a deeper bond with the land and, by extension, with the community that tends to it.





Steward of
all life forms
human and other
animals, plants
No airplanes =
fossil fuel
sold out.







This process is a body-to-body interaction; as soon as you have the soil in your hands, you begin to understand the vitality and memory it carries. In practice, you put aside your own initial ambitions and ideals and start to follow the timing of the soil. There are significant differences in the soil even over short distances; some parts are sandier, while others are more plastic and flexible, making them easier to shape and model. You need to choose the best option available around you. The soil of Lutke-meerpolder, besides its fertile characteristics, also contains a certain amount of clay, which allows me to shape and fire it into ceramic. This personal journey not only enriches my artistic practice but also roots me more firmly in the local context, nurturing a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the environment.

Outcomes of the workshops

Everyone can learn anything; creative learning has its own methodologies, and mastery is proportional to the time you dedicate. The workshops are designed for participants to discover their authentic forms, improving self-confidence for creativity, communicate with each other, moving from an individualistic to collective perspective. During my clay workshops over the last six months, I encountered more than 300 participants and worked one-on-one with each of them. At this stage, I believe we can talk about a community, which I have titled “Amsterdam Clay Lovers.” The emotional response is very different when participants engage directly with the soil and then elaborate on it by following different processes. I use various drawing exercises to help participants discover their own authentic forms. I received very positive feedback from them— most were able to set aside their fear of drawing and allow themselves to explore their creativity, applying their initial ideas to the clay.

The historical visual examples I brought from different geographies and eras have been inspiring for the participants, encouraging their reflections and creativity on the relationship between humans and non-humans. Including neglected geographies and civilizations often overlooked in mainstream historical narratives offers new insights into our perception of otherness and sparks curiosity to learn more about the “other.”

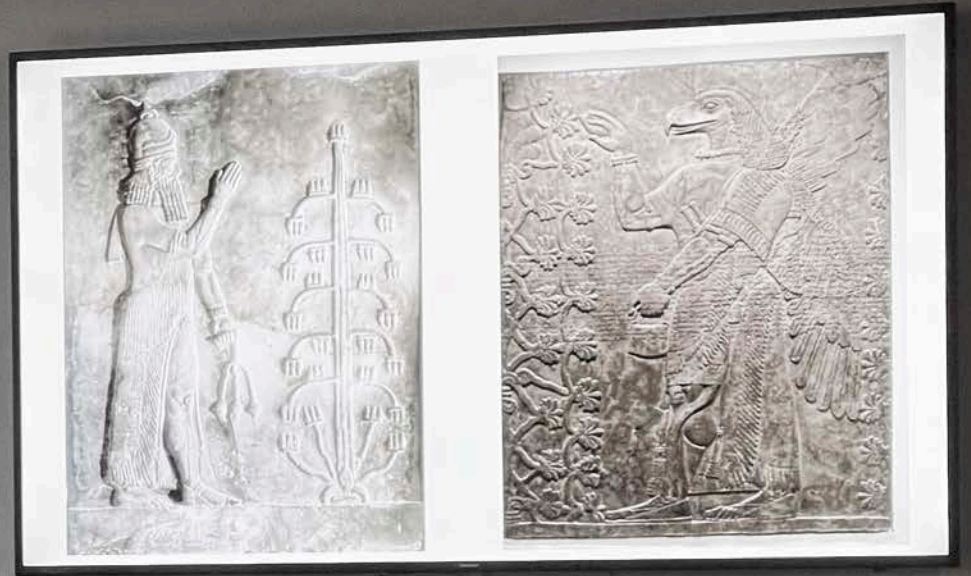
Clay Objects: Reflections of Experience

Diversity, whether cultural or biological, enriches our lives and communities. The challenge lies in balancing diverse cultural heritages with the broader, often dominant, Western paradigms. This balance requires sensitivity and openness to different perspectives and practices. In this context, clay workshops emerge as a powerful tool, erasing geographical boundaries, difference of age, ethnicity, education and gender. This gives foreground to open up to the approach of a communal mindset, where the focus is on coming together, becoming one with the community, and appreciating the intrinsic value of diversity – both among people and within biodiversity.

Through these workshops, a social engagement unfolds, allowing participants to explore possibilities for reconnection and dialogue. The clay objects created in these workshops serve as tangible reflections of this journey. They encapsulate the experience and the findings, offering a sensorial understanding of the process. These objects become symbols of the interconnectedness of society and nature. Moreover, they inspire a heightened consciousness in food consumption, reminding participants of the importance of mindful eating and sustainable agricultural practices. During the clay workshops, we shared homemade dishes for lunch, exchanged recipes, and discussed the health aspects of the ingredients and their backgrounds. These were valuable moments of sharing, socializing, and connecting around food.

The clay works were fired in my ceramic studio in Amsterdam. Caring for each object, transporting them, placing them in the kiln, and anxiously awaiting good results were moments when I felt deeply connected to the community of Clay Lovers. The pop-up exhibitions were opportunities for evaluation and renewing our interaction.

Esra Sakir
2024, Amsterdam





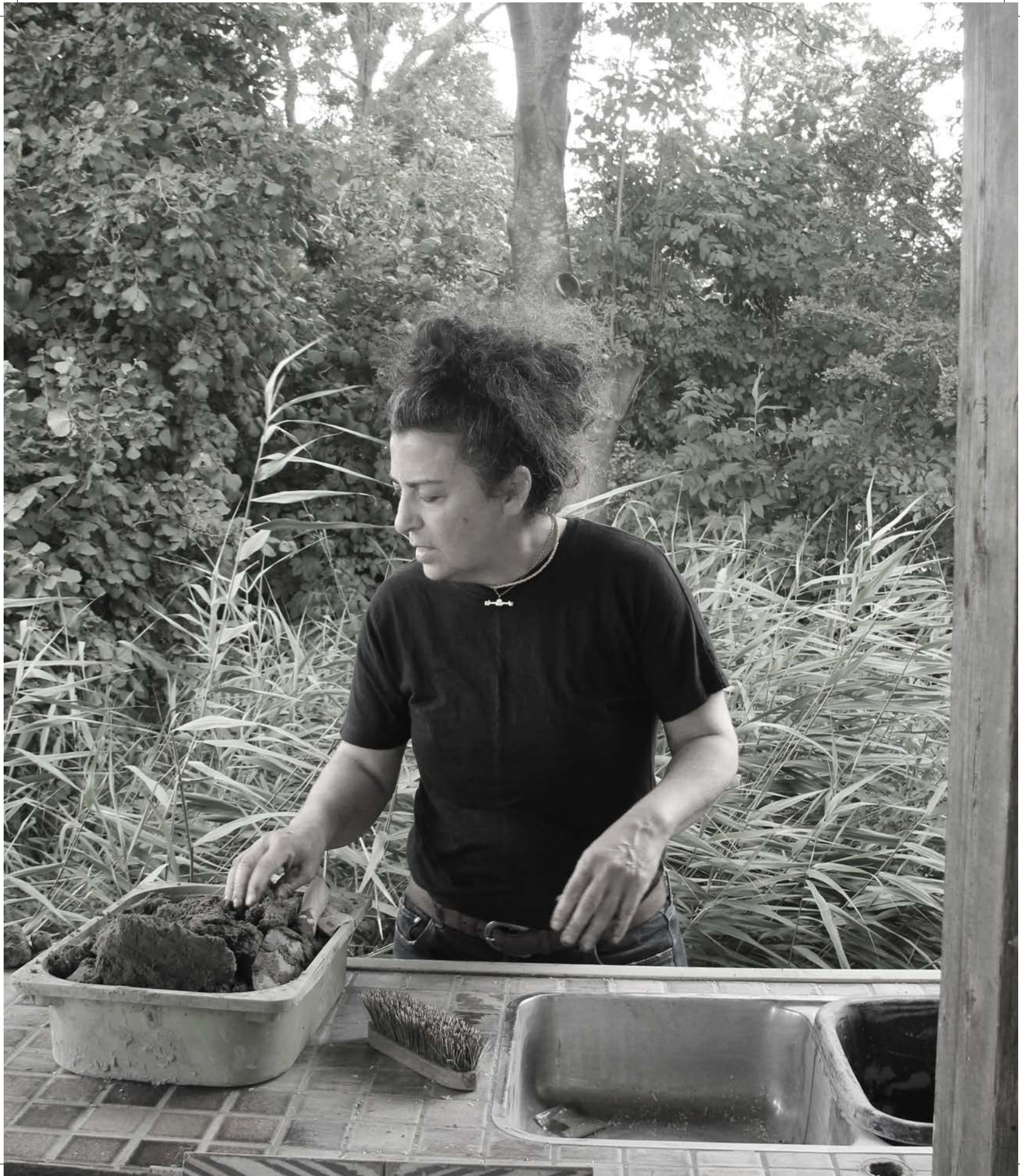


























The above map shows the locations where the residency took place. In total there were three exhibitions, three harvesting sessions, eight workshops and many clayworks fired at Esra's atelier.

24 March, 12 & 19 May: Clay Harvesting & Workshop @ Voedselpark Amsterdam

3 & 11 April: Mud Break Workshop @ New Metropolis Nieuw-West

5 May: Gold of Amsterdam Workshop @ Plein '40-'45

20 & 21 May: Mud Break Artist Open-Call @ De Bouwput

22 May: Mud Break Exhibition @ De Bouwput

14 June: Workshop & Exhibition @ Voedselpark Amsterdam

12 June: Mud Break Exhibition @ New Metropolis with concert by Mehmet Polat & Maryana Golovchenko

25 July: de Appel Amsterdam Summer School Workshop

7 July: Het Blauwe Zone Festival New Metropolis Workshop

Mud Break is a series of workshops created by Esra Sakir. During the spring of 2024 these workshops were conducted using the clay of Lutkemeerpolder in collaboration with Voedselpark Amsterdam and Waag Futurelab. This is part of the project 'A Food Park for Amsterdam: land, community and a commons infrastructure for regenerative agriculture', financed by Stichting DOEN.

www.doen.nl

Esra Sakir
www.esrasakir.com

Stichting Grond van Bestaan represents Voedselpark Amsterdam in this project. Voedselpark Amsterdam is made up of a growing community of people and organisations that strive for a different way of thinking. Who want to connect the city to the countryside. From counteracting climate change, to capturing water, to promoting biodiversity, but also the societal value of connecting young people to food and different cultures to each other. The plan Voedselpark Amsterdam shows how and why it is necessary for our city and our future.

www.voedselparkamsterdam.nl

Waag Futurelab has operated for 30 years on the cutting edge of society, technology and art. She conducts her activities in a local, national and international context and has been assigned by the ministry of Education, Culture and Science, as Futurelab for design & technology. Waag's Urban Ecology Lab researches questions such as: how can we renew the relationship between people and their environment? How can we create practices that build a regenerative ecological system?

www.waag.org

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Fairytale,
Esra Sakir 2024,
Lutkemeerpolder clay
18x18x43,5 cm

