

An abstract graphic design featuring a white background with several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes. A long, thin green shape extends from the top left towards the center. Below it, a large, rounded pink shape is partially obscured by a darker, almost black, rounded shape. In the bottom left corner, there is a green, leaf-like shape with three distinct lobes. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

the other way





The Other Way's first experiment was to create a trans kitchen garden.

This is a cultivation practice for difficult times.

We dreamt a garden that could offer hospitable space for inconvenient bodies – full of plants that have been abandoned because they fail to serve commercial agriculture. We found companions in squash plants whose fruits were too long, too asymmetrical, too suggestive. Plants whose offspring did not replicate the parent, and those whose seeds can lie dormant for forty years, surviving through drought and salt water to sprout in their own time.

Gardens are practical tools of survival in a crisis, but they can't be cultivated on demand. The living things in the soil, the seeds, the fruits all have their tempos.

I stick a finger into cold soil, pinch and ball it in my palm.





Trans Times – Emergency & Lag

This is a cultivation practice against emergency.

Emergency shapes trans existence. Indeed, the very existence of trans people is framed as an emergency. Moral panic op eds, political attack ads, and legislation repeat the story that trans people have suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, here to attack women, mutilate children, defy common sense, and destroy society. No matter how repetitive, the trans-emergency story never gets old because trans people are somehow always new, just emerging.

Even stories that argue for trans equality often treat trans people as part of a new and changing world – a bright new future of equality and a new frontier in the battle for justice. Whether a promise or a threat, trans people are called upon to BE the future, to bring about a radical new world. No matter how repetitive, the trans-emergency story never gets old because trans people are somehow always new.

Of course, trans people are not new, and moral panics are not new, and responding to culture wars is not new. And yet – this state of emergency remains one of the felt temporalities of trans living in this moment. Responding to trans antagonism, mourning trans murder, fighting for rights and building vibrant communities and mutual aid projects – all of these are essential, and are part of living through emergency.

Trans times are driven by emergency, but they get experienced as lag. Waiting – the space between being and being allowed to be – is a very trans temporality. Because trans existence is always “too soon,” actually living trans lives is forcibly delayed. This often comes from those who see themselves as supportive: the people who just want us to be really sure, those who are just concerned that we’ll regret it, from doctors who need evidence of sustained discomfort to provide care.

Trans pain and evidence of prolonged suffering are demanded as the prerequisite for trans existence. To exist in a persistent probationary period is lag. To hang the timeline of trans

existence on the comfort of people who do not want trans people to exist (yet) – that is lag.

Lag isn’t just inconvenience – it’s deadening and it’s deadly. It shapes the small moments, the glance that is too long, the extra pause in uneasy salutations. It drags on for months and years of waiting lists or waiting to leave home. It powers the friction of concerns that “we just don’t have enough data”. Of course nothing could be worse than for someone to be trans who wasn’t “really trans,” so it’s important to add “watchful waiting” before trans people can access care. Wait and see is wait and we will see. Lag has no set end. It drags because the very existence of trans people is a future that has already happened but must be somehow delayed.

It’s reasonable to respond to lag by demanding immediate action – care on demand, no more waiting. Emergence, not emergency.

But in the garden we can craft an other time, if only fleetingly. Time outside of emergency has to be snatched where it can.



There is no permanence in a body.

Trans ways of becoming defy the fantasy of permanent states of embodied existence – but trans people are not special. Beings change.

Impermanence is what most deeply governs the embodied experience of all people, and neither forced waiting nor emergency measures can enforce conformity to an original state, a perfect moment of creation. The belief that there should be stability and permanence in a body is a fantasy. A fantasy of a body that won't be changed, a body without lasting illness, a body whose internal and external conditions of identity are unchanging, a replicable body whose birthright can be continued through children brought up as legacy for the parent.

Trans people are accused of living in a fantasy world, but trans living inhabits this truth: There is no permanence in a body.



Gardening in the End Times

This is a cultivation practice for a breaking world.

I want to remember what it feels like to move the squash plants to the garden in the middle of a heat wave. A wave feels like an inadequate name for the June that just passed. The blast of heat and dryness is weighted with the heaviness of a planetary future arrived. A blast of heat in a blasted year.

The garden went in late – for reasons that make sense on a human timeline. B's dying and death was important to attend and care for. But the squash only know that they've been confined long after they should have been transplanted. So long that they've sent down entire root systems through their pots and tray into the soil below. And now I've ripped them up and placed them into mounds. Usually in the wateriness of a DC summer, it's critical to plant squash so that moisture isn't trapped around the stem of the plant. I built the mounds for a time that isn't happening now. There has been no rain in weeks. The mounds are fully exposed to the sun all day long.

The soil temperatures are soaring as the early morning air temperature climbs up through the 90s and past 100. It feels like that one terrible week in August that comes once in every ten years of Augusts. But it's all the weeks of June and July. The tiny plants are getting broiled alive from the root. The day before the funeral I give up. I give up hoping the heat will break, that the squash will manage to send roots into cooler soil below, that it isn't advised to do heavy work between 10 and 4. I dedicate the day to restructuring the mounds. I've seen drawings of how three sisters have been planted in the desert. For the second time I pull the root systems out of time. Converting the mounds to moats, sinking the roots deeper into the earth and creating catchments to hold water around the stems. It's rained so little that I connect one plant group to the next so that any water given is put to use.

The narrative around the importance of care assumes that the care works – that it's wanted and appropriately chosen. Instead this is just floundering and preventing death for now.

What we learned in the garden's first year is just how persistent some of the squash varieties are. The varieties that made it through relocation,

intense heat, waves of insects trying to take them apart, and powdery mildew explode with growth.

Tromboncini are the early growers and showers – they are out of the gate a foot per day and setting their little potential fruits before they flower. Their fecundity precedes fertilization and outstrips it. This year, though, the pollinators are missing - potential fruits fall from the vine one after the other. A handful of squash form - nothing like the plant is capable of.

Meanwhile the cucuzza grow and grow. Every night hundreds of white flowers open across the garden. Weeks pass. Each evening the white blossoms glow through the dark. So many flowers and no fruit. The days' heat seems even more catastrophic in the nights. Although the setting of the sun is a relief, there is little respite in temperature. Are the night pollinators also undone by the heat? All of July passes with no fruit. I try pollinating the flowers by hand and a handful of fuzzy swells appear on the stem.

In August the intense heat finally breaks. Day by day more swells appear. It's not til the temperatures cool for a week that things start to change – the vines explode with squash.





After Carelessness (a letter)

Honestly, I'm struggling with where to start all of this. I know I said that I was going to write about time and temporalities, but I keep coming back to bodies.

One of the things that keeps being lost – or maybe a thing I keep losing amidst everything else – is how one of the things that was being learned in the first year of this garden is your body, and your surgery. Part of this is a time question – there was the prolonged time (years and months) of deciding to pursue surgery and how it might be possible – what doctors and options were available, getting letters, waiting for insurance permissions. Then also somehow having so little time to decide and schedule. And then it was happening, quickly snuck into the week after Christmas hoping for a quick recovery so as not to interrupt work and B's end-of-life care.

Care and transition and gardens share complex temporalities I guess – times that seem to be

long awaited and then suddenly requiring quick action. How am I so quick to forget things so long anticipated?

I think of how long and how short the time after your surgery was and remains. What seemed like an endless time as I awaited texts with procedure updates, and when you finally awoke, being the last one out of the surgery center. (Sent off by a nervous new nurse who couldn't remember how to teach me to care for your medication or drains, and whose nerves I tried to calm as I also tried to assure you that not feeling one lung was a result of the anesthesia and that it would wear off.) The time measured in hours between medications, and then in weeks passing, as the hives induced by poor pain management took forever to subside. Time measured in stitches and showers and slow movements and nerve pain. And then, months later, somehow forgetting to remember that this all happened.

What did we learn about inconvenient bodies in a year of surgery? Did we make a place for care?

One of the things about bodies is how much we learn to live with them. How we learn to not

inconvenience others with their shape or their hurt or their tiredness. How much do bodies get pushed aside for other emergencies? Do bodies wait? Do they persist and move in their own ways as we turn our attention elsewhere? To be more specific – did your body both heal and not as we turned our attention to the unfolding emergency of B's death? Once you could shower and bend over and take out the trash and lift 20 pounds again, whatever discomfort persisted inside your body became invisible to me again.

I want *The Other Way*, as a garden and as a practice, to be a space for bodies, for care, and for healing. Can we cultivate, along with our weird squash and our drunk bees, a less careless kind of forgetting? Holding the complexities of change instead of simply moving on?

But I don't know if I did that. Somehow I keep forgetting that you had surgery. Somehow your new body felt familiar to me already. I recognized its new shape like you slipped into a sweater that just fit. And I don't know truthfully whether this is care or carelessness, or perhaps both. I hope it feels like my t4t love.





As the summer winds down, it's the company of squash bodies that I feel most. When I am lying on the ground underneath they offer a glimpse of what could be. They are large enough to feel their bodily relation – more than half my height in length, swaying heavily with one another in the breeze. The garden shifts the temporality of emergency, of lag, of the urgency of capitalist demand. It offers a space to live within other temporalities of feeling. Of flex, of sway, of cyclical time, and even of grief and death.

Gardens can be made anywhere. A handful of dandelions near the curb. A seed dropped by the path to the train. A moment with eyes closed, making another world of internal feeling.

I stick a finger into cold soil, pinch and ball it in my palm.

This is a cultivation practice for the times we inhabit.



