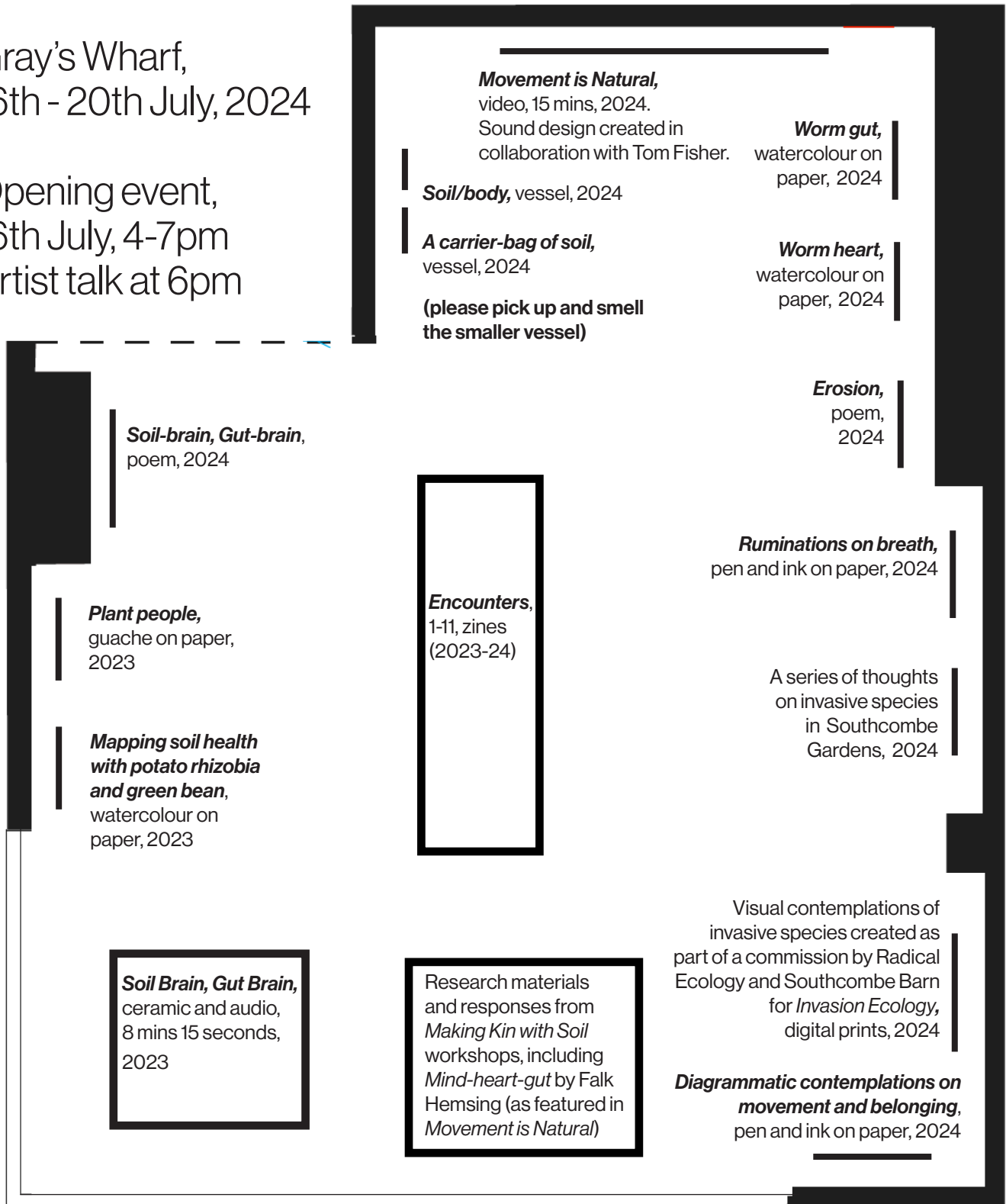


Movement is Natural

Iman Datto

Gray's Wharf,
16th - 20th July, 2024

Opening event,
16th July, 4-7pm
Artist talk at 6pm



The Movement is Natural exhibition is supported by Arts and Culture, University of Exeter, Cornwall. The project was supported by University of Exeter in partnership with Eden Project (thanks to Jodie West from University of Exeter and Hannah Hooks, Eden Project), University of Exeter Innovation, Arts and Culture and the Environment and Sustainability Institute (ESI). Special thanks to Radical Ecology for their ongoing support and commissions through their networks and programme. Thanks also to those from University of Exeter, the Eden Project, and beyond who were generous in giving up their time to talk or be interviewed about soils and their relationship to them:

Elze Hesse, Paul Griffiths, Emma Duley, Amy Matthews, Julian Donald, Leila Dawney, Tim Quine, Regan Earley, Alasdair Moore, Karen Scott, Abby Rose, Phil Young, Nicola Whyte, Naya Tsentourou, Emma Duley, Jim Scown, Rosanna Martin, Jo Elworthy, Madhu Ardhanar

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I'm interested in reorienting myself around soil, to inhabit a world that operates within another space and time-scale. Humans are part of soil communities, intrinsically linked through our gut microbiomes and the plants we cultivate and consume. I am keen to explore the deeper, relational changes required to perceive soil not only as a resource for crop production, but rather as a sticky web that entangles us humans with other life forms in rhythms of growth and decay.

– Iman Dattoo

In April and August 2023 artist Iman Dattoo undertook an artist residency at the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute (ESI) and the Eden Project. The residency, titled *Making Kin with Soil*, provided Iman with a period for research supported by conversations with scientists, growers, ecologists and researchers from University of Exeter and Eden Project. Almost a year on, *Movement is Natural*, brings together research materials, watercolour maps and poems realised during the residency, with works produced by the artist in the period since.

Central to the exhibition is a moving image work, which shares its title with the show. This explores human and nonhuman agency in the soils of Cornwall's tin and clay mining tips and pits, reenvisioning these depleted ecosystems as spaces for healing, resistance and encounter. Interwoven with the spoken narrative of the video is an audio piece made in collaboration with sound designer Tom Fisher. Together Iman and Tom recorded sounds of ingestion, digestion and respiration including: the ruminations of a goat, the reverberations and oscillations within plant stems and soils, and the sounds of licking and breathing.

Prominent in the space is the large ceramic sculpture and sound work, *Soil-brain, Gut-brain*. A piece originally commissioned by Radical Ecology for the *Against Apartheid* exhibition at KARST Gallery, 2023. *Soil-brain*, the sound, is a reflection on the meanings of fertility, vitality, and productivity for soils. Whilst, *Gut-brain*, a clay vessel, is one of several works in the gallery that uses the digestive system of an earthworm as a means to contemplate the absorption, filtration, and digestion of soils as part of a perpetual natural process.

Transcripts of some of Iman's conversations, with the people she collaborated with, provide insights into the intersection of art and science, exploring the ways in which ideas are translated and sometimes mistranslated across disciplines. Iman hopes that exhibiting these materials may encourage further dialogue and collaboration between those engaging with South West soils, emphasising agency beyond extraction and challenging the divide between natural and human-made.

Overall *Movement is Natural* is an exploration of the dynamics of soil movement and behaviour through a more-than-human lens. Critically engaging with prevailing narratives on soil management in colonial, productionist and geopower contexts, the exhibition advocates for embodied, relational practices and imagines narratives beyond those of extraction.

A project supported by
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