

Research & Performance Garden Silent Walks  
Texts, videos, photos, scripts



2021-2023

By Eleni Mylona

# Garden Silent Walks-Description, Methodology, Objectives

'GARDEN Silent Walks', is a silent participatory walk/performance proposed to be presented in various gardens within contemporary urban spaces in Europe.

(Currently in Switzerland and Greece). The performance uses walking as a relational, imaginative and aesthetic experience, which examines our relationship to others (human, and non-human), our relationship to the 'participatory', as well as to the public space.

This performance, also aims to contribute to the field of *Expanded Choreography* within late modernity, by proposing to operate with awareness in everyday actions (walking, thinking, listening, imagining) as embodied, cognitive, sensory, relational, visual, communicative dimensions and possibilities. The project envisions, in this sense, to offer "alternative ways of being together" in the contemporary world.

'GARDEN Silent Walks' consists of a walking practice and a storytelling practice. The audience (up to 15 people at a time) is invited to take part in this participatory embodied experience, which aims to redefine the ways we walk and imagine together in a garden.

## Garden Silent Walks-Description, Methodology, Objectives

The artist collects information from books, the internet, and interviews, and creates dialogues with architects, gardeners and historians (dance) as well as people from the garden community. Thus, taking into account the knowledge of the experts about each respective garden, and in close collaboration with the dramaturg and garden architect, he designs and creates a walking path that is created exclusively for that particular garden. Written texts, audio and video documentation, online meetings, face-to-face interviews, walking interviews as a biographical method (WIBM) are the methods used to collect the relevant information in order to create both the paths and the narrative-sound environment.

The first part of the silent walk, is mainly concerned with "how our bodies - our autonomous and collective bodies - walk together" the choreographies they create in space, the rhythm created, the ways we feel, perceive, hear and sense together in silence. There are also certain characteristics that the practice itself reveals. The "loss" of time, during a fairly slow walk, the internal dialogues that occur within the participants' bodies, a collective group rhythm, and sometimes a meditative body/mind state that is created and described by participants as "mindlessness", "loss" or "distraction".

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Each walk in each respective garden creates a different experience for the participants. The factors considered in each garden, however, have the following methodological orientation: **Time** and how different times of day inform the garden walk (morning, evening). **Rhythm** and the element of community that rhythm creates when different walking paces are introduced during the walk. The **Body** and the ways in which it reacts to environmental elements both physically and cognitively. The **Imagination** and the ways in which it is activated when we change the places in which the storytelling takes place during the garden walk. (while walking we pause where the narrative takes place, or this happens at the end of the walk as a narrative environment or a mixture of these). In this sense, walking is treated as a method itself (as opposed to 'mere' movement or the experience of everyday life).

At the end of each walk a framework is provided for verbal and written feedback from the participants/community, if they are willing to share it with the artist.

Video and audio documentation are present in all parts of the process.

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At the same time, a garden related storytelling environment is developed.

The narratives created are rooted in the real, everyday, mundane features, descriptions and details related to the garden, but aim to create a public-social space for engaging with the imagination. In this sense, the narratives move from the personal to the relational and public, and from the real to the imaginary and poetic, and are therefore understood as "open-ended ". Thus, both the walking paths and the ecology of the narrative around the respective garden, aim to invite participants to see the current space-place from many different perspectives and in a variety of ways, in order to open up new spaces in his/her perception, sensation and imagination.

'Silent Walks' started in September 2021 in Steffisburg, Switzerland, where Eleni Mylona was invited by Kunsthaus Steffisburg and Kollektiv\_Kollektiv. At that time the artist proposed a silent walk in Steffisburg, Switzerland, and a choreography workshop in the public space. The whole event was supported by Kunsthaus Steffisburg. The research had the opportunity to go a step further in December '21 under the title: "IM GARTEN" (Eva Angelaka, Eleni Mylonas Curation Eleni Michaelides) when it was supported as a pop-up project by Pro Helvetia, in which Mylona had the opportunity for the first time to create a walk and storytelling environment for a Japanese garden, in Zurich.

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MAXIM Theater in Zurich, commissioned a dance project to Eleni Mylonas with rehearsals from January to April '22 in Seebach, Zurich. The maker proposed to create again a 'Silent Walk' with various performative 'acts' with people from the neighbourhood, and this will be presented at Seebach storytelling festival in Zurich.

In July '22 another 'Silent walk through' will take place under the support of DANCE Days Chania, the dance festival on the island of Crete, where Steriani Tsintziloni and Eleni Mylonas will create together a silent walk through the old town of Chania, as well as a workshop for the participants.

Based on the aforementioned processes, the silent participatory walk "GARDEN Silent Walks" aims to examine walking and imagination in various gardens within contemporary urban spaces in Europe.

Finally, if the artist, Eleni Mylona, (and that's me writing this letter) had to describe a longer term vision of this performance, she/ I would say it is:  
"To be able to continue this research as a long-term process, involving more and more gardens, more and more artists, more and more participants, and walkers, and choreographers, and storytellers, and listeners, and institutions, and cities, and countries, in different parts of the world."

## Garden Silent Walks- Concept

The 'Silent Walk' proposes a way, a process, on how to visit a garden, a region or a place, and this way is always related to the particularities of each place and its community. Each garden, place or space, forms a different "silent walk", which relates to the place itself, not only as a route, but also in relation to the instructions proposed by the artist, at various predetermined pauses/stops during the walk.

What we feel, perceive and sense in the space, through the proposed "silent walk"? How can we highlight the particularities of the garden through this walk in this particular place, through this particular path?

There are, however, certain features that the practice itself reveals. The 'loss' of time, during a rather slow walk, the internal dialogues that occur within the bodies of the participants, a collective group rhythm, and sometimes a meditative body/mind state that is created and described as 'absent-mindedness', 'loss' or 'distraction'.

Starting from these general characteristics, the performance also suggests a series of imaginative instructions, as well as a narrative environment that frames the walking route. The purpose of this is to see the garden from many different perspectives/angles and in a variety of ways, in order to open up new 'spaces' in the perception, sensation and imagination of the public.

# GARDEN Silent Walks

Photos from the archive



Kunsthaus Steffisburg  
Kollektiv\_Kollektiv



IM GARTEN  
Click: Jia Xi Han

# GARDEN Silent Walks

Photos from the archive

Click: Jia Xi Han

Orangerie & Bonsai Garten Zurich 4& 5/12.21 Projekt: IM GARTEN

Eva Angelaka, Eleni Mylona, Curation: Eleni Michaelidi. With the support of Pro Helvetia



# GARDEN Silent Walks Photos from the archive





## Example IMAGINARY TASKS- Archive

Now let's take a minute in silence  
and in stillness.

And try to observe the sounds that we  
hear around us.

First, the loud ones, like my voice,  
and then the sounds that are not so  
loud.

Listen carefully. Listen to the  
sounds that are subtle, even to the  
ones that are not there yet, but we  
know they exist, like the sound of a  
leaf falling from a tree, or the  
sound fresh air makes, coming in from  
an open window...

## Examples Imaginary Tasks- Archive

I would now like us to pay attention to what contains water around us. Where do you see, feel, hear water? Is it in the form of a small lake, does it come from the mountains, is it imaginary or real? Where does it start and where does it end? How many directions and levels does it have? Does it become a river?

This time, let's focus on what is happening under our feet. Feel the ground beneath your feet. Feel the gravity and how heavy your feet are on the ground. Feel the ankles and knees, how do they stand in relation to the feet?

And what is underneath the soles? What are we stepping on? Grass? Ground? Mud? Snow?

Now lift your foot off the ground and look literally under your feet, at the earth, and notice how many living things (if any) are moving, jumping, walking, crawling, running? How do you feel their gravity in relation to your own? How much life is there under our feet?



## IMAGINARY TASKS- Archive

Let's find a way to come closer to the ground now.

And let's touch the ground, the soil, the earth.

How does it feel to the touch? Is it cold, or warm? Hard or soft? Wet or dry?

Now, while still touching the ground, let's observe the other bodies around us.

How does this COMMON TOUCH feel like?



## VIDEO Archive

<https://vimeo.com/653471139>

<https://vimeo.com/653589051>

Orangerie & Bonsai Garden,  
Zurich,  
with the support of Prohelvetia

<https://vimeo.com/610509837/4b21198fbc>

Silent Walk through Steffisburg,  
with the support of Kunsthaus  
Steffisburg



# Garden Silent Walks

## Storytelling Environment - Script & Archive

This time, I would like to let our eyes wander around, until we find the mountains.

How far are they from here? Are they real or imaginary?

Pay attention to the alpine landscape. What are the plants you see, or imagine in this environment? Maybe a *Rhododendron* (from Ancient Greek ρόδον "rose" and δένδρον "tree") appears before your eyes. It may be Pink, Purple, Red, White, or Yellow in color, and you know it attracts birds. In late spring to early summer, the air around the flowers can be delightfully scented with a sweet and spicy clove scent reminiscent of cottage pinks and carnations.

In the garden, the 'alpine landscape garden' harmoniously integrates the modern weekend house into its surroundings. Further out, the garden merges into nature, which has been left undisturbed by humans. Newly planted in the garden: larches, rowan, rhododendrons, and erica from the area.



# Garden Silent Walks

## Storytelling Environment - Script & Archive

I would like now to propose to imagine a small bonsai tree, a pinus parvifolia, (don't worry if you don't know the name) appearing before you.

It 's green and beautiful.

And a lemon tree, with many juicy lemons appears. 

How do they look?

Do their appearance inform the whole environment around you and how?

Do you maybe see sunshine suddenly shining above you? 

Do you maybe feel warmer? Or do you imagine the bonsai covered with snow?

How this imaginary of the appearance of a bonsai tree and a lemon tree, inform your walk up to now, and this specific moment?

Jia Xi Han





# Garden Silent Walks

## Storytelling Environment - Script & Archive

I would like us now to listen to a song.

This song was written by Richard Wagner, who lived here, at villa Schönberg, right across the street, from April 1857 to July 1858 and experienced a fruitful creative phase here. Wagner wrote large parts of Tristan und Isolde here and set five poems by his muse Mathilde Wesendonck to music to create the famous Wesendonck Lieder. I would like us to listen to one of them now.

I like to imagine him, wandering around the villa, restless, going up and down the floors of the villa, in order to find inspiration.

I like to imagine a light still lit on one of the windows of the villa, where Wagner is staying awake until very late in the night to compose these songs.

Let's hear the song now. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msadX7MI2s8>



# Garden Silent Walks

## Storytelling Environment - Script & Archive

There is one more bit of information related to the story, that I would like to share with you now.

Wagner's wife, Minna, writes about the same period Wagner leaves Zurich for good, writes the following to Matilde Wesendonck:

*"I must tell you with a bleeding heart that you have succeeded in separating my husband from me after nearly twenty-two years of marriage. May this noble deed contribute to your peace of mind, to your happiness'.*



## Garden Silent Walks

### Storytelling Environment - Script & Archive

I left for last, to talk about this space we are in now. I would like to give us some time to look at the space. Again as before, I would propose to look with our eyes, hear with our ears, sense with our senses. What is it now, what was it before and what will it be, in the future, this space?

If you didn't know anything about this space, what would you imagine about it? There are actually some things I would like to reveal about this space, that might help with the imaginary.

So, imagine two towers.



On the right hand side, there is the flat, low, isolated, but still in ensembles composed, part of the garden.

At the side, towards the back of the park, guiding into the open space, the great tree landscape.

Nature.

# Garden Silent Walks- Credits & Biographies of Key Collaborators

**Conception-Research-Performance:** Eleni Mylona

**Dramaturgy:** Rodia Vomvolou

**Garden Architect-** Consultant for creating a walking path: Zürich - Ioulitta Stavridi

**Artistic advisor/ Theoretical Research Consultant- External Eye:** Zurich & Athens:

Steriani Tsintziloni

**Artistic advisor/ feedback creation advisor:** Zurich & Athens, Elena Novakovits

**Costume:** Hallelujah

**Photos-video:** Zürich Jia Xi Han, Athens Alina Lefa

**Eleni Mylona** is a performance maker, researcher and performer based in Zurich .Within her practice as and through research, she explores the possibilities of language and body within time and space, and the relation of language to imagination. During the last years, she has been exploring ways to read, move, exchange, and imagine together, with the intention to create intimate, caring spaces of coexistence. Her work has been invited by festivals, art fairs, and biennales and it has been shown in theaters, galleries, and experimental spaces, in Athens, Thessaloniki, Zurich, Basel, Berlin, London and Arnhem. In Zurich, she has collaborated with several institutions and companies (Tanzhaus Zurich, Rote Fabrik Theater, Holzke, Maxim Theater, Trop cher to share, Terrasse Ensemble, and others) as a maker, performer, movement practitioner and initiator of reading and writing groups. She holds an MA in Theatre Practices, from ArtEZ University of the Arts, in Holland. She has studied dance at the National School of Dance in Greece (K.S.O.T) and holds a dance and dance teacher degree from the 'Morianova-Trasta Professional School of Higher Education' in Athens. She has collaborated as a performer and/or has been invited to take part in research projects with the following artists: Michael Klein, Vera Mantero, Juan Dominguez, Danae Theodoridou, Anna Sanchez, Jean Paul Jaccarini, and others. ([www.mylonaeleni.com](http://www.mylonaeleni.com))

# Garden Silent Walks- Credits & Biographies of Collaborators

**Rodia Vomvolou** (1993, Greece) is a performing arts dramaturg and researcher based in Amsterdam/Athens. She is currently doing a PhD research project in Utrecht University, on the self-positioning of the dance dramaturg in the context of transformations in the working conditions of neoliberal economy and in the field of knowledge, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Maaike Bleeker. Rodia graduated from Utrecht University in 2018 with an MA in Contemporary Theatre, Dance and Dramaturgy (Cum laude) supported by John S. Latsis Foundation Scholarship. She also holds a BA in Drama and Performance Theory, History and Analysis from the School of Drama, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece (Cum Laude). As a freelancer dramaturg and mentor, she collaborates with several artists, institutions and Dance Houses in the Netherlands and abroad (Dansmakers Amsterdam, Dansateliers Rotterdam, Circustruction Rotterdam, Dance House Lemesos, Dance Days Chania, ZfinMalta i.a.). Since 2019 she is the mentor and curator of the Artistic Development programme "Moving the New" of Dance House Limassol in Cyprus. She curates and moderates, along with Elena Novakovits, the project "Infinite Potentials: Choreographic Traces", a series of performative encounters discussing the notion of contemporary choreography and taking places in different European countries.

**Ioulitta Stavridi** is an architect based in Zurich. She has multidisciplinary professional experience in Architectural Design, simultaneous overview of different project scales, and is responsible for Project Organisation and Activities' Distribution. Her working experience includes among others, working as a Project Leader Landscape Architect at Laboratorium Zurich, as a Landscape Architect at anton ghiggi landschaft architektur & at Vogt Landschaftsarchitekten, and as a Tree Nursery Specialist and Gardener at Lüscher Baumschulen Zurich. She has worked as an architect in Madrid, Athens and Zurich. She holds an MAS Landscape Architecture from ETH University Zurich, and an MA Architect Ingeneer form NTUA in Athens. She has taken part in many Architectural Exhibitions, and Publications and has won several prizes in a series of Architectural Competitions. ( Ersatzneubau Wohnsiedlung Seminarstrasse Open competition wih prequalification, Zurich TOKEH 1. Prize, Parco VIARNO 2. Prize, Wohnen am Obstgartenweg, XYLO, Kempraten, 2. Prize,, Erweiterungsneubau Kantonsschule Limmattal Open Competition, Zurich Enclosure 7. Prize, architektur 0.15 Exhibition von Zeitschichten und Stadterosion: Pfingstweidpark with anton ghiggi landschaft architektur Zurich, hochparterre Wettbewerbe 5 Project: Erweiterungsneuba Kantonsschule Limmattal Enclosure 7. Kuratiert, Trans Magazin #27, Publication Reus Valley, and many others).

# Garden Silent Walks- References

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- Walking artists network: <https://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/>
- Rethinking Cities- Andrew Stuck
- The museum of Walking- Andrew Stuck <https://www.museumofwalking.org.uk/>
- Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes- R.L.Stevenson
- Photo- A line Made by Walking- Richard Long  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-p07149>
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- Audio Walking: 'Her Long Black Hair'- Janet Cardiff
- Talking Walking
- Walkinglab
- The Walking Library for women Walking
- Action Plus, Greece



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