

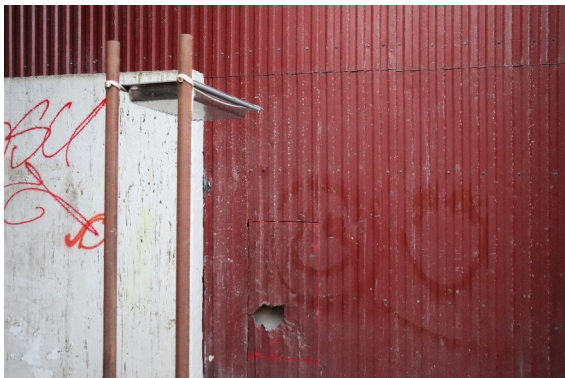
SCREWS, FECES, BRANCHES, NEEDLES, LEAVES AND CORPSES.

60°24'34.7"N 5°19'18.8"E

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The work will be shared outside in a dusty, shadowy corner of the school. As it might be rainy, windy or cold please be sure to bring a jacket. To get there you exit the cantina towards the docks and turn left. Keep going until you reach a deadend. We prefer not to share too much beforehand. In fact, we consider it ideal to have no prior knowledge of what is to come. Nevertheless we attach a few short texts and photographs.



‘And what if, instead of teaching them to speak, we were to learn to be silent ourselves? If we sided with the delinquents, with the madmen, with the schoolchildren, then justice, the education system, the asylum become grotesque; but if we side with the mute, then language becomes grotesque.’

Fernand Deligny, *Graine de crapule* (1945)

- Ornithocentrism

Derived from the Ancient Greek *órnis* 'bird'.

1. a belief in birds and their existence as the most important and central fact in the universe.

- Columbarium

Based on the Latin *Colomba*, which is based on the bird family of pigeons and doves (*Columbidae*).

1. from Latin, literally 'pigeon-house', from *columba* 'pigeon'.
2. a chamber or wall with small niches for urns containing the ashes of the dead.

- Columbarian

1. a dove-keeper, a pigeon-fancier.

- Squab

Of uncertain origin; from Swedish *skvabb* 'loose, fat flesh'.

1. a nestling pigeon, still unfledged.
2. the meat of such a bird, used as food.

- Guano

From Spanish: 'fertilizer, dung'; Latin American Spanish *huano* 'dung' from Quechua *wamu* 'dung for fuel, fertilizer'.

1. the accumulated excrement of seabirds or bats. High content of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium, all key nutrients essential for plant growth.

- Niche

From French, literally 'recess', from *nicher* 'to nestle, nest, build a nest', based on Latin *nidus* 'nest'. In Sanskrit: *nidah* 'resting place'.

1. shallow recess in a wall.
2. ecological: position of a species in an ecosystem.

- Coo (plural coos)

Of imitative origin.

1. the murmuring sound made by a dove or pigeon.
2. (by extension) an expression of pleasure made by a person.

- Mutant

From Latin, *mutantem* 'changing', present participle of *mutare* 'to change'.

1. an animal or plant that is physically different from others of the same species because of a change in its genes.

- Feces

From Latin, plural of *faex* 'dregs'. Dreg: from Old Norse *dregg* 'sediment'.

1. waste matter discharged from the intestines; excrement.
2. dregs; sediment.

THE ORIGIN OF FECES

It's all changing, it always has been. There come additions, things are rearranged, critters welcome themselves, relationships are formed; every single speck of dust will have a new beginning. There is destruction, removal, paths are erased, words are left unspoken, the forest is burned, the nest is abandoned and there is blood on the floor. It's all decomposing; critters are buried in the soil and become part of the humus that sustains these trees. A month ago they came here to gather branches for their nests. New branches will grow and fall down to the ground. Another critter will gather them, another nest will be made. So much of that nest comes from this tree, his roots, the soil he's in, the fungi and so much of this tree comes from that nest, the eggs, the bodies, the droppings. How much of the tree bark is pigeon flesh and how much of the pigeon flesh is tree bark? Very little; it is rare for a bird to pass on in this soil. The people don't have the habit of burying them; their corpses are often treated in other manners.

Burials have only started happening recently. The last time was during a day that we later marked as a day of remembrance for reasons unrelated to the burial. It was pure coincidence that it happened on the same day, the 12th of May.

The removal of a green ladder signaled that our way of being of this world was transforming. It was a violent act. Sparks flew everywhere when the metal was cut. The eight screws keeping the ladder going up to the pigeons were unscrewed; they have no need for it and neither do we. Their home is not a zoo, their eggs are not attractions; we are not caretakers, not sightseers. We are one specie, one animal amongst others in this dark corner and we have to get along. We could be accused of ornithocentrism; many of our actions are in service of winged critters, often disregarding others, sometimes compromising their safety.

The first time one of us slept here it was underneath around twenty pigeons. For the entire night they did not make a single sound; there was dead silence. The first call came somewhere around four in the morning from a single pigeon and it was unlike any other we ever heard. It was as if something was stuck in their throat and they were desperately trying to get it out; perhaps it was a morning call. We got up a little later and walked around the back to put away our sleeping bags. On the floor between the ladder and us, no more than fifty centimeters from where we laid, there was now a pigeon. He could not be scared off; he made not a single movement. He remained how he was: dead silent. Underneath the trees we dug a hole and buried him a few hours later. That evening there was a quiz right next to his grave. People peed on the path underneath the staircase and behind the firewall. The next morning that is where a girl gets consoled by her friend. One pigeon was gathering branches for its nest; they are quite selective with their pickings: this branch is too light, that one too heavy, another too brittle and another too firm; plastic zip ties are ideal. He was tugging at a root exactly where his friend lay now buried. Just a week later he ends up in the soil right beside him. The cause of death unknown, a hooded crow finds its dinner, the intestines are left behind, blood turns brown, a vacant nesting place.



FALLING DOWN AND FLYING UP

We put a large bucket underneath a dripping rain pipe six meters above. It stands on an uneven surface; when the bucket fills and the water eventually flows over the edge it does so only on one side. There, underneath the water flowing out, we put the lid of a metal cooking pot. And so the rain goes from sky to roof to pipe to bucket to lid to bird. Only a tiny fraction of the rain pouring down actually reaches a pigeon; on average, a pigeon will drink around ten centiliters of water per day. Most of the water misses the lid and ends up on the ground. From there it then creeps along the concrete and goes downward, passing by a metal roster, until it reaches a space under our feet filled with countless pieces of concrete left over from construction works years before. This space continues in a straight line for around thirty meters and reaches a dead-end below our neighbor's building. Much of it is flooded. Along the entire length run the remains of steel machinery from the building's past activities that were presumably once connected to the structures the pigeons now call their home. It has long been abandoned now; the water has turned orange because of rust and on top of the steel dirt has gathered out of which a plant has grown.

We used the water from that bucket to clean; often we fully emptied it. That meant their closest water source had dried up; it was unacceptable. In the kitchen we found a metal cooking tray able to hold five liters of water. We attached a metal plate functioning as a landing on one side. Two long poles were screwed into the concrete to elevate the tray two meters and a half from the ground. For weeks they were suspicious of it. Only when the younger generation had shown that there is no danger in drinking from the container they all accepted it. They sometimes perch on there five at a time, both drinking and bathing. They seem to be comfortable up there; they do not flee with people standing right underneath.

The water gets dirty; it turns greenish. We throw it out and clean the container with a brush that fits the width only just. After some light rain the water drips down with a steady rhythm; it is close to our average walking pace. It takes around two hours for the container to be filled to the brim. The sound of drops on the metal is loud, sharp, harsh; the metal shouts. When it hits the water it is like a small puddle; the sound is much softer, it is gentle; the water whispers. In between those two states there is a short time you hear both. During heavy rain there is a continuous flow; the sound drowns out everything else. Wind makes the pipe wobble up, down and sideways. Much of the water then hits the edges or misses the container entirely. We never have to look to know how much water is in there; it is easy to tell just by listening. When it hasn't rained for some hours the rhythm is slow and a small que forms at the drainage hole; for every two raindrops falling in there is one that exits and falls down to the ground. Whenever a bird lands on or departs from the structure it shakes in a way similar to the pipe and the rhythm of the departing drips is temporarily sped up.

