

**CROSS-**

**POPPLES**

**20.3.-**

**13.4.23**

**VOX-POP**

**POPPLES-**

**POLLINIA  
TITONIS**

CROSS-POLLINATIONS places living specimens of Petunia plants from the collection at Science Park on public display in VOX-POP. Accompanied by the artworks of Christian Herren, the flowers invite the visitor into the multimedia interactive installations built by studio imaginalis.

Inspired by the many instances of cross-pollination present in botany and artistic discourse, CROSS-POLLINATIONS facilitates encounters between artists, scientists and plant life, inviting them to get acquainted with one another and engender new ways of being – together.

Despite being known to scientists working in the field, the collection remains largely unknown locally. We thus began our work with the objective of ‘opening up’ the collection. Aiming to increase the collection’s notoriety and its accessibility to local audiences, we began tracing the lines that connect the Petunia collection – as a repository of living heritage – to the rich legacy of Amsterdam as a city of flower commerce and plant science.

Drawing from the expertise of several contributors from the fields of art history, plant molecular biology, and art, CROSS-POLLINATIONS is an exhibition aimed at fostering free flowing, cross-disciplinary contaminations.

## To be rebuilt with the materials of your time 2021 – Christian Herren

The installation, of which six prints are shown in CROSS-POLLINATIONS, recalls the tradition of still-life paintings of flowers, and draws attention to the gaps between reality and representation, art and science, and ultimately, to an understanding of the economic significance of flowers and the socio-political developments (genetically modified organisms, or GMOs) associated with them. In 1962 Andy Warhol (1928-1987) exhibited his “Flowers” for the first time: silkscreen prints showing blooms in bright colours that do not exist in nature. Simultaneously, the Genetic Institute of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) was breeding real Petunia flowers, generating colours that do not exist in the natural environment. The outcomes of these breeding experiments are preserved in small watercolours documenting the laboratory flowers. A total of 120 of these watercolours served as the basis for Christian Herren’s installation ‘To be rebuilt with the materials of your time’. They can be seen in Truth Loops.

## Vox Corollae 2023 – studio imaginalis

These ‘listening booths’ invite you to step into the rarefied atmosphere of a travelling greenhouse. Guided by the voice of Dr Quattrochio, visitors are welcome to sit down and breathe in the pungent scent of petunia flowers, enclosed wood and plastic inserts. While hearing about specific petunia lines, and the mutations that confer them their distinctive colouring, shape or architecture, visitors are able to look at the corresponding plants and observe the ways in which genetic mutations impact their appearance.

## Petunias 2023 – the Petunia collection

The genetics of the plants present in our exhibition have actually been part of the Petunia research group’s collection since the 1950s and can be traced back, through their crossings, along ancestral lines dating back decades. The plants in the UvA’s collection are the result of wild petunia

breeding, which began in the 19th century with colonial European efforts to extract, collect, and taxonomise wild petunias from their native environment in South America. To achieve ever more extravagant colours, petunias have been heavily cross-pollinated by humans throughout the past two centuries, and continue to remain a staple of the ornamental flower market. If free of pesticides, petunia flowers are edible and the whole plant is used in traditional medicine for its anti-nociceptive (calming effect on bodily injuries) and anti-inflammatory properties.

## Truth Loops 2023 – the Petunia collection

In Truth Loops, two screens face each other. On one side, the Petunia collection articulates itself in images used for scientific divulgation and academic publishing. On the other, hundreds of watercolours loop alongside their high-resolution counterparts. These botanical illustrations draw our attention to an important phenomena in the history of science. After centuries spent in a spasmodic search for truth and objective reality, beginning with the employment of artists in the fields of medical and botanical illustrations and their later replacement by cameras in the mid 19th century, the 1950s saw a return to old artistic mediums. The camera – an instrument that always moved in tandem with the currents of European imperial histories – is finally understood as an unreliable narrator.

In the Petunia collection, it becomes clear around this time that film is hard to store and preserve. Minimal changes in temperature and humidity levels can damage the films and the recorded flower colours until they become unrecognisable. The work of the camera is then entrusted again to a human: for several years beginning in the 1970s a woman visits the Petunia collection to sketch the colours of flowers – vital markers of genetic makeup and mutation – in a subjective but enduring way. Her name is not known to us. Lost in the archives of the collection, the only trace left of her is her work, silently looping along in hundreds of detailed drawings. Colour painting eventually stopped in the 1980s, the quality of photographic reproduction, once again, being considered accurate enough to realistically represent petunia colours.

## Cross-pollinating the Archives 2023 – studio imaginalis

The idea of making a digital platform to house an open-source archive of the Petunia collection was inspired by *Below the Surface*, a project that archives the archaeological finds of Amsterdam’s North/South metro line. *Below the Surface* represented for studio imaginalis an important case study on the intersection between storytelling, imagination and digital heritage. Making delicate heritage collections radically accessible represents one of the most interesting challenges in our futures. Working with Lucas Martin and Aaron Harding, studio imaginalis began sketching the beta-version of *Cross-pollinating the Archives*. The finished platform – towards whose completion we keep working – will house an archival database with scientific descriptions of all petunia lines in the Petunia collection. Through the website, visitors, students, UvA staff and artists will be able to contact the Petunia collection’s team directly to inquire about collaborations and visits. The digital interactive tool will be expanded to include the whole collection and allow users to share their compositions on the website. Access the current version via the QR code or our iPad.

# P U B L I C

*Cross-pollinations* is accompanied by an extensive public programme, including panel talks, a lecture series, guided tours, botanical drawing workshops and more. The programme further explores the richness of the University of Amsterdam’s scientific research on flowers and plants, from a variety of perspectives – artistic, historical, cultural and scientific. All events are free of charge and open to the public. Events with limited places require registration.

## M A R G E M I N

**BO** V o x - P o p

1700 Exhibition Opening.

1800 Artist’s Talk with Christian Herren and Marta Pagliuca Pelacani (curator).

1830 DJ set by yulia ~ harri and borrel.

## A P P R E N T

**FL** S c i e n c e P a r k

1200/ Guided visits to the Petunia collection’s green-houses – Limited places, registration required.

## B V O X - P O P

1700 The Petunia collection as living heritage. Lectures by: Ronald Koes (Prof. Development Biology, UvA)

“The Petunia collection: an introduction” – Dr Tamara van Kessel (Coordinator MA Heritage and Memory, UvA) “Botanical heritage, Genetics and Global culture”.

## H O R T U S / V O X - P O P

1200 Guided visit to the Hortus – Limited places, registration required. ( **HRB** )

1500 Botanical drawing workshop with Hannah Haring – Limited places, registration required. ( **WPP** )

## B V O X - P O P

1700 Scientific research: visibility and accessibility. Lectures by Francesca Quattrochio (Associate Professor Faculty of Science, UvA) “The Achievements of Petunia-based research” and Hans Mulder (Collection Specialist Natural History, Allard Pierson) “María Sibylla Merian: the first ecologist?”.

## G V O X - P O P

1200 Goede Gesprekken X CROSS-POLLINATIONS, Conversation between Marieke de Goede (Dean Faculty of Humanities, UvA) and Peter van Tien-deren (Dean Faculty of Science, UvA) on interdisciplinary collaboration between the two faculties.

## Friday 7 to Monday 10 April: closed due to Easter Break

## FL Allard Pierson Museum /Vox-Pop

1300 Guided tour of the Allard Pierson’s Natural History collection with Hans Mulder. ( **WPP** )

1500 Botanical drawing workshop with Hannah Haring – Limited places, registration required. ( **WPP** )

# P R O G R A M M E

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## M A R G E M I N

1700 Human-plant entanglements. Lectures by Charles Rouleau (Casino Display Luxembourg) “On plant-human collaborative research” and Pamela Strazzer (PhD candidate, UvA) “Solving Tomorrow’s challenges: Petunia research in biology and agriculture”.

## FLS V O X - P O P

1600 ‘Curating the University’ panel discussion with the team of Cross-pollinations moderated by Marta Pagliuca Pelacani (Curator).

## FLS V O X - P O P

1700 finissage with Tea and Biscuits.

## L O C A T I O N S

**WPP** Vox-Pop, Binnengasthuis 9, Amsterdam

**SPP** Science Park 904, Amsterdam, pick up at reception

**APP** Allard Pierson Museum, Oude Turfmarkt 127-129, Amsterdam

**HRB** Hortus Botanicus, Plantage Middenlaan 2a, Amsterdam

## C O L O P H O N

**C U R A T I O N**

Marta Pagliuca Pelacani – curator  
Richard Weaver – digital curator  
Martin van Wijk – junior curator

**P R O D U C T I O N**

Toni Brell – graphic design

Lucas Martin – senior software developer

Aaron Harding – senior software developer

Bart Groeneveld – project manager FNNWI

Ghanima Kowsolea – project manager VOX-POP

Dr. Francesca Quattrochio – associate professor

Christian Herren – artist

**S P O N S O R S**

VOX-POP

Diversity Science Fund

FNNWI

**A S P E C I A L T H A N K S T O**

Ronald Koes, Hans Mulder, Myrriam van der Hoek, Hannah

Haring, Francesca Quattrochio, Tamara van Kessel, Charles

Rouleau, Pamela Strazzer, Floris Marsman, Noor Breuning,

Iulia Ionesi, Harry Reddick, Marie Ilse Bourlanges