

GENERAL CURATORIAL STATEMENT

We find ourselves at a crucial moment. Climate change, the degradation of natural resources, including air and soil quality, and a growing human population put our global, societal and environmental systems – our future – under serious threat. How can we steer the ecological hazardous curve towards a viable, acceptable future for plants and humans? How can we prevent further crises? Looking for inspiration and effective solutions we turn to plants, to Biotech, to AI and more. Through plants we can learn the previously unknown and correct our mistakes. Through Biotech we can drive plants and humans to the future. Through AI we can gain efficient support for our mission. By opening our minds and responsibly developing the boundless possibilities of technology we hope to sustain Our Bio-Tech Planet and the Future of Plants and Humans.

The *Our Bio-Tech Planet: Future of Plants and Humans (OBTP)* event brings together a broad international and multigenerational group of innovators and experts in the fields of art, food, health and agriculture in Rome's historic Botanical Garden to begin a new constructive dialogue with the vegetable realm.

How can we use innovation in biotechnology to access the power of plants and forge a better future for us all?

OBTP sprouts from a five-year-long collaboration between ASN and our 16 partners in the EU Horizon 2020 supported Chicory Innovation Consortium (CHIC) which offers a platform for interdisciplinary collaborations between top EU scientists, artists, food experts and the general public. The intercultural, cross-disciplinary art/science/technology event invites us to reflect upon the interdependence of plants and humans and our combined future through daily panel discussions and workshops, live performances and an art exhibition, including *Rhizosphere: The Big Network of Small Worlds*.



GENERAL - CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Vegetation systems and biodiversity, the future of agriculture, nutrition and health, Genetic Modification (GMO) and New Plant Breeding Techniques (NPBTs), life on another planet and interspecies communication are thrown into focus through this varied, interactive event. Artworks that span from molecular orchestration to novel "*Urpflanze*", sensual interactions to virtual intelligent networks, and micro-landscapes to interstellar wonderings will cover ground-breaking innovations and invite the public to engage in relevant, contemporary discussions, expanding imaginations and inspiring bold visions.

Our Bio-Tech Planet: Future of Plants and Humans dares to seek answers to uncomfortable questions through innovative communication strategies in which art becomes the language of scientific expression. Together, scientists and artists; humans and plants; the past and the future will try to unveil:

What next for the Future of Plants and Humans?



EXHIBITION

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Art and science are the Yin and Yang of powerful communication.

Historically (most notably during the Renaissance) man used the combined power of art and science to contribute to society by absorbing and in turn communicating the teachings of nature. Now more than ever we must revisit this approach and apply the forces of both disciplines to learning from one of our planet's greatest assets: plants. It is up to our combined efforts to take what we can glean from plants and apply it to reversing the curve of extinction so as to find solutions for our common "future". Through taking inspiration from plants and communicating through the arts, we can help forge a new, sustainable path for Our Bio-Tech Planet and safeguard the Future of Plants and Humans.

In the *Our Bio-Tech Planet: Future of Plants and Humans (OBTP)* multi-media exhibition we present works that explore: **how artistic practice combines with scientific research to communicate the power of plants**

and ask: **how can we use creativity and innovation to bridge the gap between science and art; plants and humans and embrace Yang and Yin for the good of our planet's future?**

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EXHIBITION - CURATORIAL STATEMENT

This varied, interactive art exhibition, held as part of The OBTP event in Rome's lush Botanical Gardens, covers everything from vegetation systems and biodiversity, the future of agriculture, nutrition and health, Genetic Modified Organisms and New Plant Breeding Techniques, life on another planet and interspecies communication. Through unique artistic expressions across genres, mediums and languages we interpret and re-communicate key scientific messages in a comprehensible way.

OBTP brings together a broad international and multigenerational group of artistic innovators to begin a new constructive dialogue and pose the difficult, delicate questions that are proving all the more necessary in today's fraught world.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Relations between humans and plants are at the root of human civilisation. The (first) agriculture revolution, during the Neolithic period, brought a wide-scale transition of many human cultures allowing for settlements and global population growth. Experimenting with plants and observing their behaviour led to the domestication of plants into crops which in turn sparked wider environmental and societal transformations. An unprecedented impact of humans on the global ecosystem and our current Anthropocene state was the result.

How could further unforeseen results of scientific developments determine the future of plants and humans?

Today we find ourselves in a deep crisis which calls for prompt and effective solutions. Our global, societal and environmental systems are under threat. Climate change, the degradation of natural resources (of air and soil quality) and a growing human population to feed means we are in a state of emergency. It is difficult to compete with grim dystopian visions but, unlike during the first agricultural revolution, we no longer live in isolated, micro societies. Today's global, macro-society allows for cross-border, cross-disciplinary exchange and thus, the existence of multinational interdisciplinary science and technology research projects like CHIC consortium to manage, or to define, our future. New biotechnologies are applied to plant breeding in the hope of increasing food production and quality, reducing food waste and maintaining better nutritional values, thus addressing one of the most worrying challenges of our era: food insecurity. We are witnessing the dawn of another grand breakthrough in our entangled history – a new revolution powered by rapid advances in science and technology, transforming Earth into a Bio-Tech Planet. The consequences of wide scale, complex interactions of this new dynamic network are hard to predict. One thing remains certain – there will be a radical shift in values, assets and norms and the core way that humans think. A global approach is progressively important considering the constant new challenges and, equally, great opportunities we face.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS - CURATORIAL STATEMENT

What will the future of plants and humans be?

How will environmental changes, artificial Intelligence and biotechnology influence evolutionary processes? How sustainable will this new world be for future generations? With the support of the CHIC project the event *Our Bio-Tech Planet: The Future of Plants and Humans* will engage scientists, humanists, artists, policy makers and the public in discussions around these complex questions. We will try every day, step by step, to address at least one of the multiplex issues shaping the unknown of our FUTURE:

- the role of humans and technology in plant evolution
- the role of plant diversity, networking and ingenuity in human evolution
- the role of plants and humans in food production for the well-being of the world
- the cryptic, secret relationship between plants and humans
- the reproduction, evolution and transformation of plants and humans
- the extinction of plants and humans
- the strength of plants for food quality and human health
- and more

Discussion around these subjects will no doubt lead to the all important follow-up question:

How can we continue to reap future and new benefits from plants to help us define and drive our future instead of giving in to: *what we will be we will have to be; what we will become we will have to become?*



WORKSHOPS

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Communication is at the root of evolution and is key in determining the path that our combined futures will take. In *Our Bio-Tech Planet: Future of Plants and Humans (OBTP)* we explore communication through calling upon our senses including smell, taste, touch and more with a wink to the FUTURE. Intra-body communication (i.e. gut-to-brain), learning through detailed observation (of the microscopic), and cross-species mimicry (using Artificial Intelligence) are explored to answer the questions:

How can the positive exploitation of our senses resolve key issues arising in our biotech future?

How can we learn to both communicate and listen better for the good of the future of plants and humans?

Our current global environmental and societal issues call for prompt, effective and innovative solutions. If we do not listen to and effectively create an exchange with our fellow beings, we risk reaching the point of no return. Today's global, macro-society allows for cross-border, cross-disciplinary and cross-species exchange and thus the existence of new communication techniques. Food, technology, science and art each use universal communication methods. In this event we combine these through inviting world-class chefs, artists and educators, who use their craft in conjunction with plants, to propose solutions to the impending global breakdown.

As we continue to develop our tools, technologies and research we expand the possible realms of communication and increase the chance for collaborative survival of plants and humans. Through daily cross-disciplinary workshops OBTP will attempt, step by step, to address the multiplex issues shaping our FUTURE.



WORKSHOPS - CURATORIAL STATEMENT

These workshops will explore the all important question:

How can we reap future and new benefits from plants to help us define and drive our future instead of giving in to: *what we will be, we will have to be; what we will become, we will have to become?*

