



Olga F. Koroleva

#11



Olga F. Koroleva. 'Hidden', still from twin screen movie. 2023

About the Art Work

'Hidden' (2022) is the dual-screen iteration of my research and moving image project on the relationship between hidden disability and the companion-working plant. When it first emerged in 2020, it marked a new trajectory in my practice that explores vegetal narratives concurrent in humans and plants, tracing colonial patterns of medicinal plant extraction in the longer term.

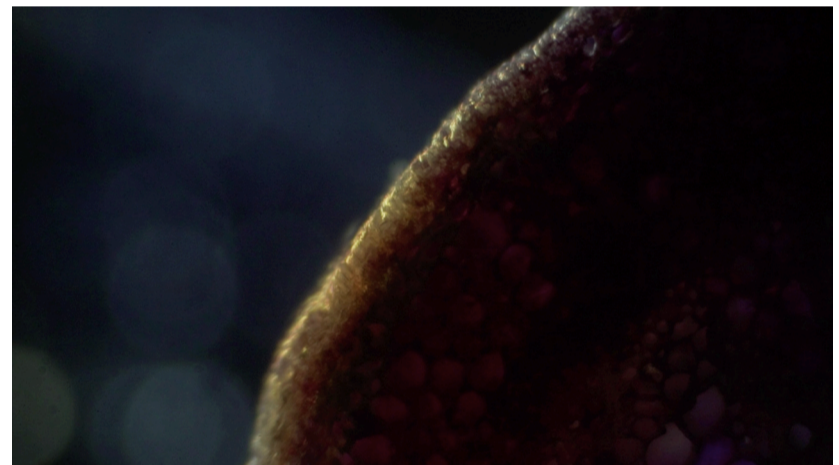
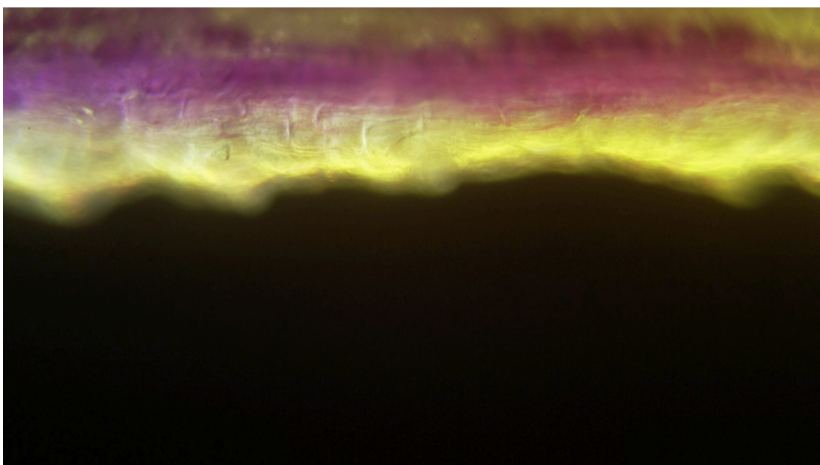
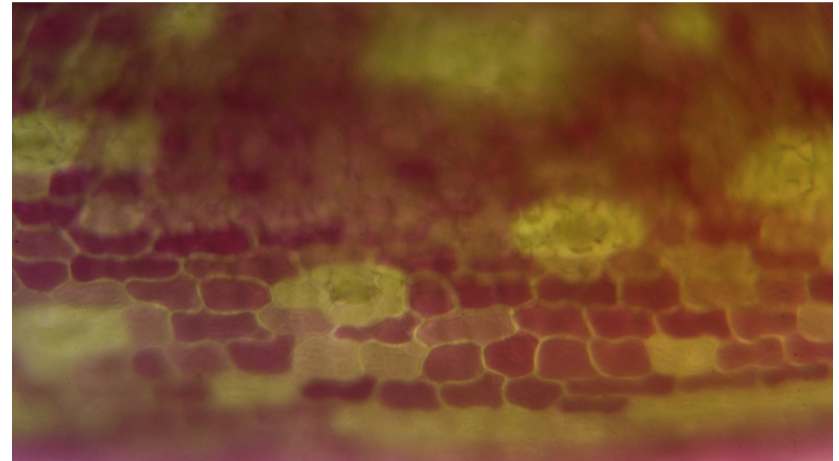
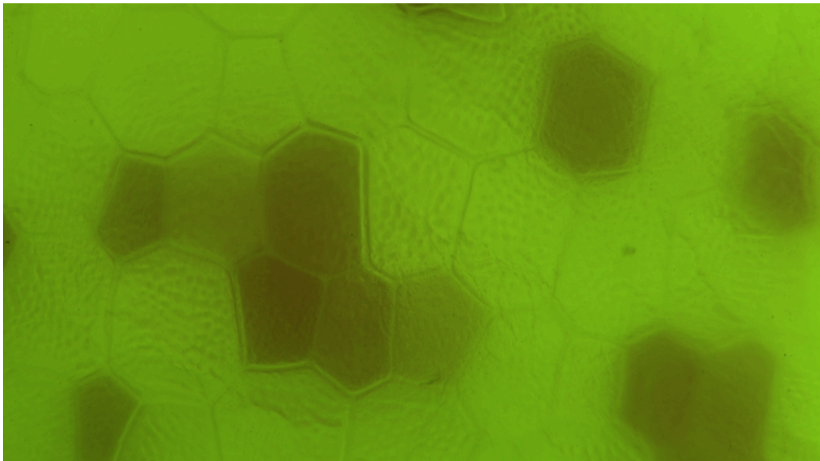
The film is based on my personal experience and life practice of managing fibromyalgia, a neurological condition that manifests in muscle and nerve pain all over the body, by working closely with the plant *Callisia Fragrans*, while both of us experience displacement, encounter and adapt together to less than hospitable places of habitation.

The work is both a marvel at the plant's medicinal properties and beauty, and a critique of the western scientific approaches favouring observation and empirical evidence, including the need to dissect and see in order to believe over intuitive and embodied knowledges inherent in indigenous worldviews.

One of the most difficult challenges that people with hidden disabilities, myself included, face is explaining one's needs to others since this difficulty is not seen. 'Hidden' is an ongoing project that aims to make the existence of fibromyalgia and the challenges that come with it more visible by working with the plant *Callisia Fragrans*, or basket plant. Although *Callisia* is endemic to Mexico (and this relationship is not uncomplex), I arrived at being able to use the knowledge the plant shares by remembering my granddad's teaching while in his birth place.

It sits within the larger with-plants research and cinematic practice whereby I work with medicinal plants using embodied knowledge passed down from my grandfather, an ethnic Tatar (Bashkortostan, Urals). By re-remembering my own connection to land*, the basis for 'Hidden' narrative, I was able to begin working with storytelling as a means of learning and sharing intuitive indigenous and embodied knowledge, which is still seen as secondary to scientific knowledge in western-bias places and fields. Longer-term still, I hope to be able to contribute to collective and community re-remembering of herbal medicine, especially as healthcare is being increasingly privatised and made inaccessible worldwide.

**this began with recognising the plant called wormwood, which I talk about in my text for FEELed Lab 'Planthuman reflections' (2023), and in the text 'Soft Forest' (2019).*



About the Artist

Above: Stills from the movie 'Hidden'

Olga F. Koroleva (she/her) is a white-passing neurodivergent crip planthuman, UK-based artist – curator – un-academic researcher – forager – lecturer – Qi Gong practitioner. Her work honours slow practice and self-care while exploring ways of non-exploitative cohabitation with multiple others on this planet. She works primarily with expanded research cinema, and is the founder of the international peer group The Political Animal. She has taught at Sheffield Hallam University, The Royal College of Art, London, The School of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University, Wimbledon College of Arts, Chelsea College of Art and Design, and Bucknell University, PA, US. Her recent work has been made possible with funding from the Arts Council England.

Her moving image work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including Reflection of Disability in Art, University of Macedonia, UCL Museum of Art, and V&A Museum, and The Showroom, London. Her original written work has been commissioned for Ocean Archive, TBA21-Academy and CSPA Quarterly. She was a Film Practice Fellow at the Centre for Film and Ethics, Queen Mary University of London (2019 - 2022), and Research Affiliate at FEELed Lab, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Canada (2023).

Olga is the founder of Meditate Medway, a disability and queer-friendly breathing and meditation initiative in Medway, Kent. She is the Treasurer at Medway Urban Green Spaces Forum, and is currently pursuing a self-lead PhD by plant practice unaffiliated with any institution.

(bio, Dec 2023)

www.olgakoroleva.com