



Fire Ecologies: Bosque Pehuén Residencies

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Location
-38.7363° N, -72.5905° E
Araucanía, Chile

Tags
CHILE
ART
CREATIVE PRACTICE
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FOREST FIRE
WILDFIRE

As part of a multi-faceted collaboration, **Fundación Mar Adentro (FMA)** have jointly developed a residency program together with Smart Forests at the University of Cambridge and the Interdisciplinary Center for Research and Artistic Creation of the Universidad La Frontera in Chile. This program, held in March and April 2024, brought together five artists, scientists and designers during March and April 2024 in the Andean Araucanía region in Chile to explore fires and forest fires from multiple perspectives.

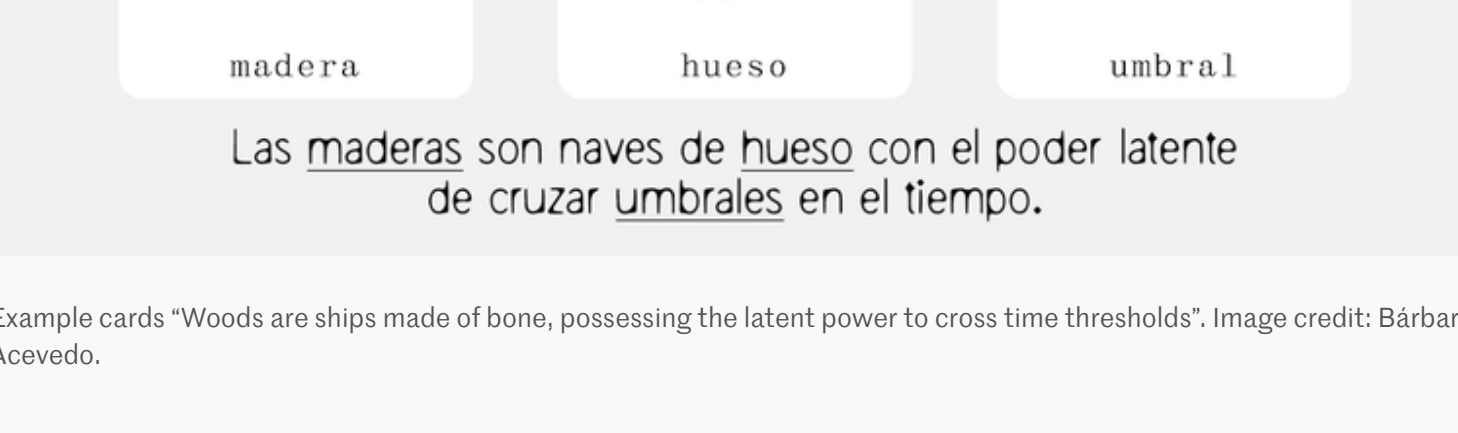
Since 2016, FMA have promoted this residency program, conceived as a transdisciplinary laboratory for creative research on nature conservation, particularly engaging with the temperate forests of the Andean Araucanía. We hold this program twice a year in **Bosque Ehuén**, a conservation area of approximately 900 hectares located in the Palguín Alto area, bordering the Villarica National Park. Every year, the forest welcomes us to critically reflect on our relationship with nature, and for this 11th version, we chose to explore **fire**.

The word 'fire' comes from the Latin *focus*, referring to the place where a fire was lit to cook or heat an abode, and in its adaptation to Spanish, *fuego*, gives rise to the word 'home'. People, knowledge, rituals and traditions come together around a fire. Around the fire, there is life, healing, alchemy, curiosity, and an authentic reception of energy, but it also brings destruction, death, scars, and transformation. Fire is one of the many elemental forces within ecosystems. The ecology of fire seeks to study its origins, what influences its spread and intensity, and the relationship that fire maintains with human and **more-than-human** life.

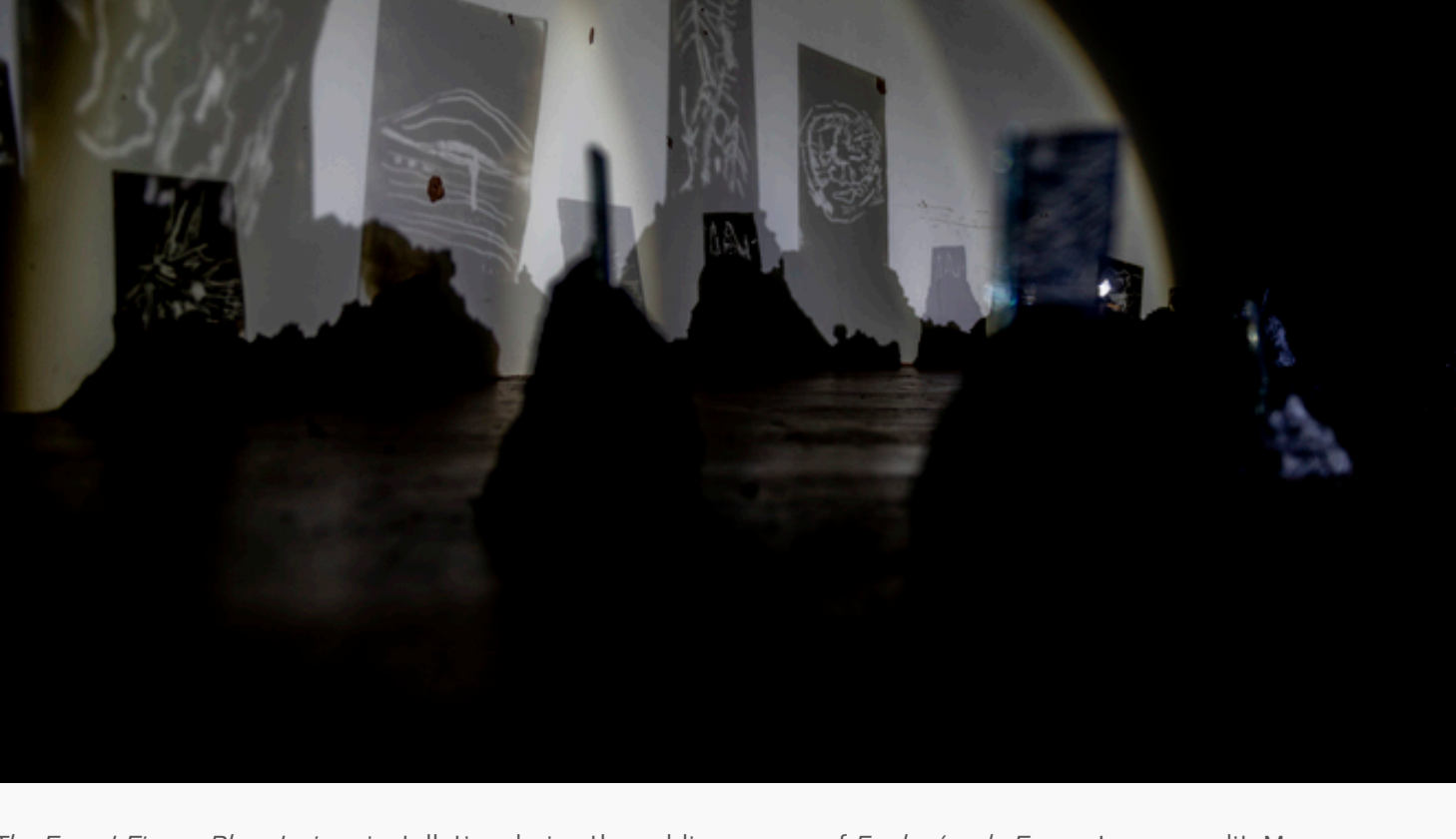
It is from this perspective that the curatorial context of *Fire Ecologies* emerged, welcoming **Bárbara Acevedo**, **Pamela Iglesias**, **Fernanda López Quilodrán**, **Valeria Palma**, and **Gianna Salamanca** to **Bosque Pehuén**, where they delved into the multiple socio-ecological and cultural dimensions of fire. Its relationship with forests, and the diverse lives present in these ecosystems. Through an exchange of knowledge, experiences, field activities, excursions, and the study of archives and images, they each carried out individual and collective research on the various epistemologies of fire, its interrelationships with **climate change**, implications and/or resonances regarding gender, interculturality, and significance according to various worldviews present in the Araucanía.

The results of their research and creative processes were presented in a public program on April 16, 2024 at **Casa Varas**, a cultural center in Temuco. Below are some of the investigations that materialized as artistic processes, essays, videos, **games**, poems, notes, and drawings:

Bárbara presents **Forest Fire as Planetarium: A Prophetic Game**, a series of visual-narrative tools for building post-apocalyptic worlds; a game that raises the questions about the consequences of the catastrophe using a non-anthropocentric vocabulary.



Example cards "Woods are ships made of bone, possessing the latent power to cross time thresholds". Image credit: Bárbara Acevedo.



The Forest Fire as Planetarium, installation during the public program of Ecología de Fuego. Image credit: Marcos Maldonado.

Pamela, on the other hand, introduces an intercultural perspective by generating a video-performance work in progress titled *Intermediate Disturbance*. This project takes as its starting point the Mapuche myth of *Lalen Kuzen* (the ancient spider), which tells of a spider that appears in the fire and visits Mapuche women to teach them the secrets of spinning and weaving on a loom.



Intermediate Disturbance installation at Casa Varas, with wool spider garment and process video. Image credit: Pamela Iglesias.



Pamela Iglesias testing spider garment in Bosque Pehuén, Chile. Image credit: Pamela Iglesias.

Fernanda, in turn, approaches the study of fire through her body and a reading of **carbon** emissions with a suit that combines **art** and electronic technology. The different readings are translated into a diagram, a poem and a **video** of its creation process.



Forest poem. Image credit: Fernanda Lopez Quilodran.

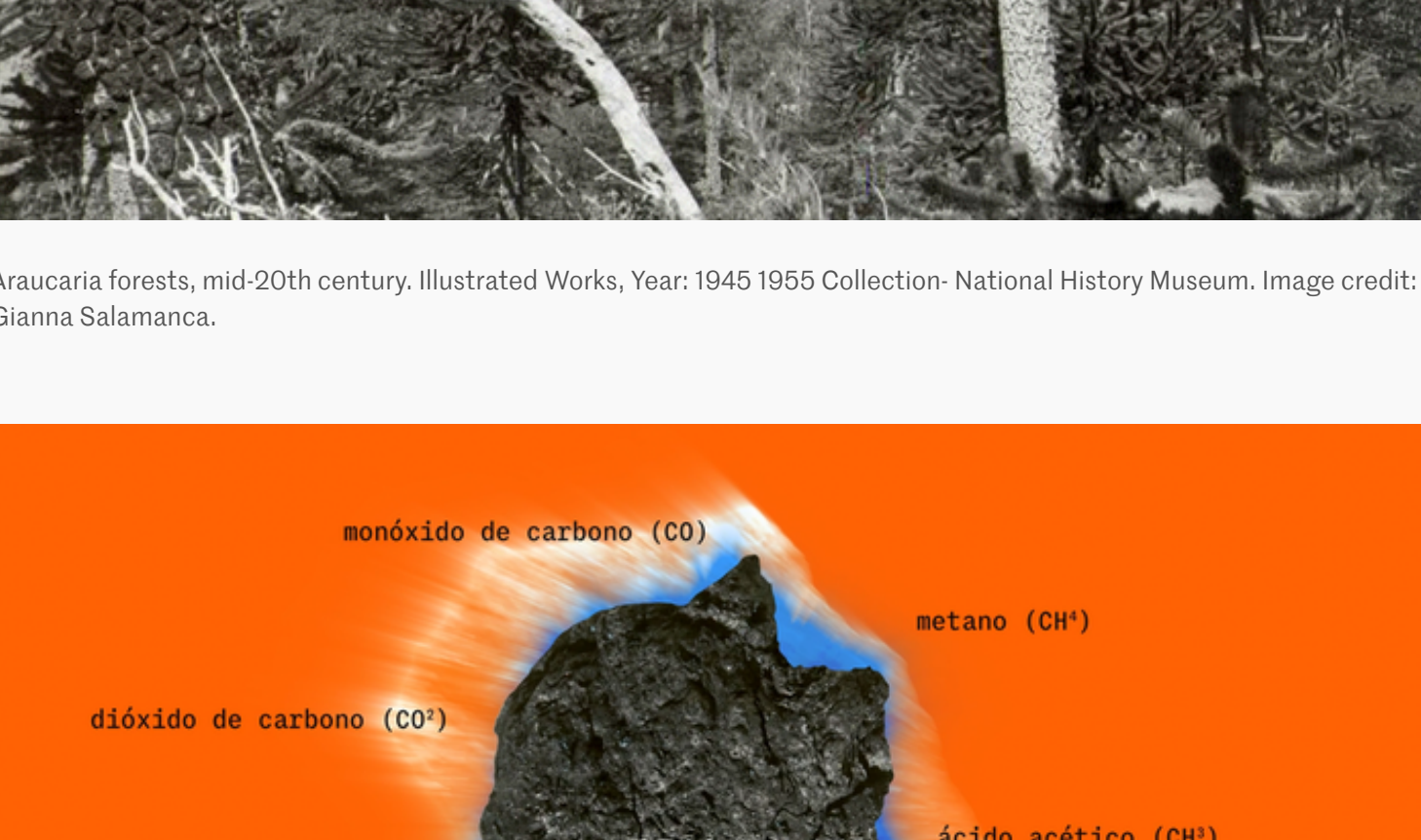


The process of testing electronic sensors worn by the artist in Bosque Pehuén. Source: Residencia Bosque Pehuén - Ciclo Ecología de Fuego 2024. Fundación Mar Adentro - Video available toward the end of the post.

Gianna's writings and animations open perspectives on biocultural notions of fire, introducing stories and historicities of charcoal and its relationship with insects, **fungi**, and soils in the forest.

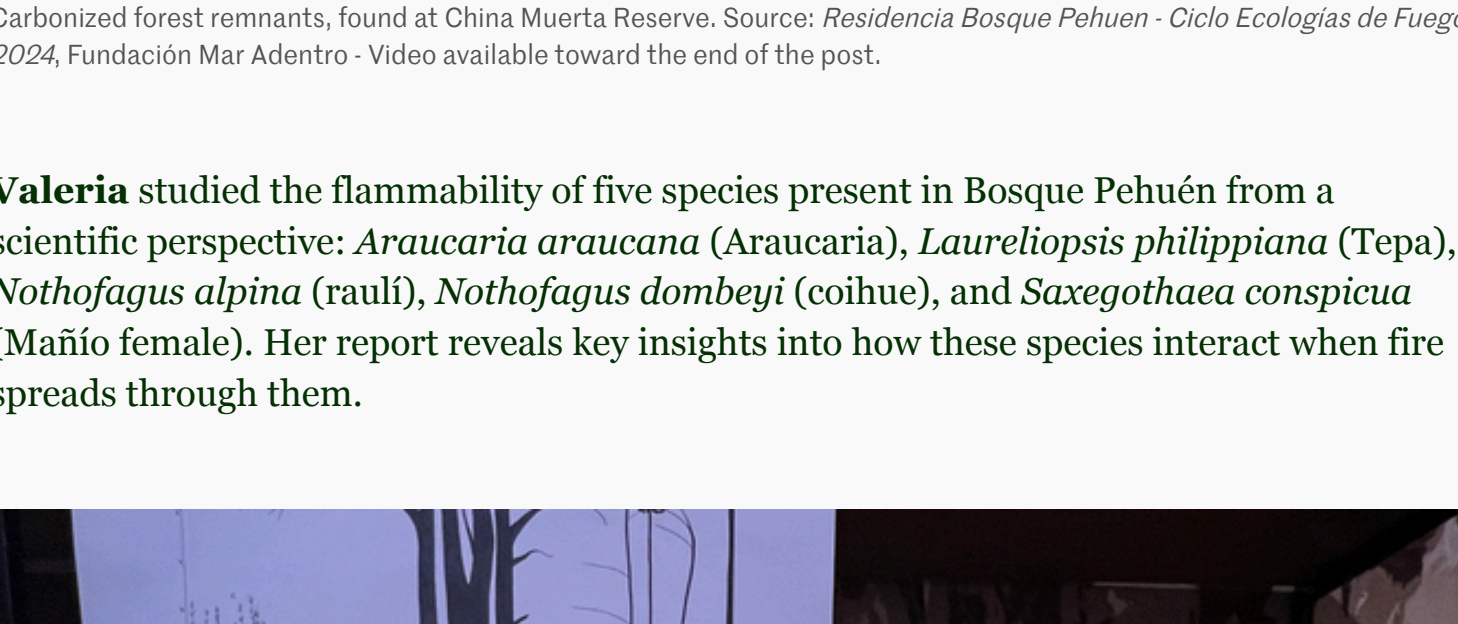


Araucaria forests, mid-20th century. Illustrated Works, Year: 1945-1955 Collection: National History Museum. Image credit: Gianna Salamanca.



Carbonized forest remnant, found at China Muerta Reserve. Source: Residencia Bosque Pehuén - Ciclo Ecología de Fuego 2024. Fundación Mar Adentro - Video available toward the end of the post.

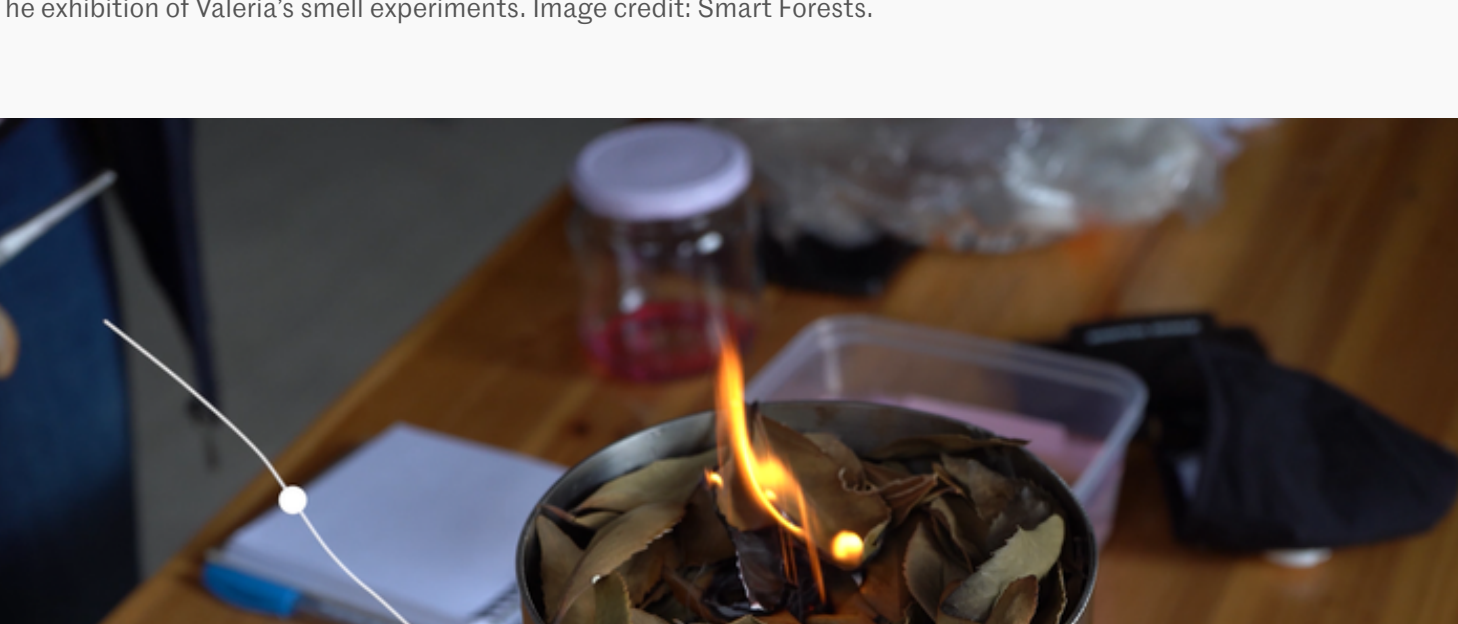
Valeria studied the flammability of five species present in Bosque Pehuén from a scientific perspective: *Araucaria araucana* (Araucaria), *Laurelopsis philippiana* (Tepa), *Nothofagus alpina* (raul), *Nothofagus dombergii* (coihue), and *Saxegothaea conspicua* (Maño female). Her report reveals key insights into how these species interact when fire spreads through them.



The exhibition of Valeria's small experiments. Image credit: Smart Forests.



Flammability experiment with different forest plant species. Source: Residencia Bosque Pehuén - Ciclo Ecología de Fuego 2024. Fundación Mar Adentro - Video available below.



About the residents:

Bárbara Acevedo Strange (CL-DE, 1993) studied **Communication Design** at the University of the Arts (ARTEZ) and Media Philosophy at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG). Her work explores the relationship between visual language and the creation of realities, with a special interest in iconographic systems and their impact on the perception of the world in certain structural frameworks.

Pamela Iglesias (ARG-CL, 1977) has a degree in **Art** from the Catholic University. She has participated in three biennials and various exhibitions in and outside **Chile**. Her production is linked to issues of gender, feminism, migration, and the periphery, through photography, **video**, art, textiles, **installation**, and other disciplines.

Fernanda López Quilodrán (CL, 1991) is a visual artist with a Bachelor's degree in Art from the Catholic University and a Master's degree in Visual Arts from the University of Chile. Her research encompasses reflections that arise between the subject and the cultural, social, political and natural context, with a view to understanding what is alive. She has participated in residencies and biennials and has exhibited and projected her work in various countries.

Valeria Palma (CL, 1996) is a Natural Resources Engineer who recently graduated from the University of La Frontera (UFRO). She has been part of the UFRO Ecosystems and Forests Laboratory since 2022, where she has worked alongside **Dr. Andrés Fuentes Ramírez** in the fire ecology research line.

Gianna Salamanca (CL, 1986) is a researcher and visual artist from the University of Chile (UC), with a Master's in Human Settlements and Environment from UC with postgraduate studies in **Restoration** and Environmental Rehabilitation of Terrestrial Ecosystems (UC) and Sustainable **Heritage** and Territorial Development (UC). She has been a socio-territorial analyst in **Fondecyt** projects on environmental conflicts and territorial recovery processes with **Indigenous communities**. Currently, she is part of the PhD program in Architecture and Urban Studies (UC).

Header image: A group photo during a residency walk.

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