

PillPlant, 2024

Blown-glass sculptures

Plants and extracts provided through the collaboration with NIRIS LAB, Polo Meccatronica, Rovereto
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Alberta Pane, Paris-Venice

In his research, characterised by a multidisciplinary approach, Christian Fogarolli frequently draws on research and knowledge that come from the worlds of psychology, medicine and archiving, as well as art. Always interested in exploring mental, social and cultural dynamics at the base of humankind's thinking and acting, Fogarolli has realised the work *PillPlant*, in which human and non-human are presented as parts of the same body.

The blown glass sculpture, which resembles a brain, contains blue lavender, an alpine plant with proven therapeutic properties, capable of soothing the central nervous system and combating fatigue, relieving headaches and migraines, but also calming stomach pains and nervous-related digestive problems.

The work originates from an interest in exploring the positive effects of coming into contact with natural elements in mountainous areas, on both physical and mental well-being.

In fact, recent studies show that contact with natural environments, such as green areas, woods and forests, results in less incidences of allergy, autoimmune disturbances and high stress levels and, conversely, an improvement in cardiovascular functions, and in hemodynamic, neuroendocrinic, metabolic and oxidative indices, as well as in mental processes and psychic well-being. In these natural or mountainous environments, medicinal herbs and plants are present: natural products endowed with specific active ingredients that vary in nature: anti-inflammatory, sedative, tonifying, purifying.

Mountain Biodiversity

The extreme environmental conditions that typify the mountain environment represent a great challenge for the organisms that live there. The interaction between climate and mountains produces an extremely complex environmental heterogeneity that leads to a greater diversity of species that succeed in adapting to local conditions. The habitat's ecological variety, even over short altitude differences, as well as geographic isolation, means that mountains are important centers of diversification and hotspots of biodiversity.¹

In fact, mountains are home to about a third of the diversity of terrestrial species and include 30% of the so-called key areas for biodiversity: areas that significantly contribute to the global persistence of biodiversity and priority regions for conservation. Stress forces plants to equip themselves in order to survive adverse conditions. Marked temperature variations, lower oxygen availability, strong winds, low temperatures and high solar radiation are all factors that lead to the production of free radicals and other molecules that are hazardous for cellular structures.

To protect themselves from free radicals, mountain plants produce large quantities of antioxidant compounds that are capable of reducing the damage caused by them to cells and vegetal tissue.

This is why concentrations of antioxidant compounds in high-altitude flora are often greater compared to concentrations in hill or plain plants.² Only plants of arid, semi-desert agriculture – from pomegranate trees, to almonds to prickly pears – can compete with the properties of mountain trees. For example, chestnut wood provides the most antioxidant extracts, followed by the peel of the pomegranate fruit, and then spruce bark and silver fir twigs.

These remarkable antioxidant properties are highly beneficial for human health, and, indeed, many mountain plants have high medicinal properties that have been used for millennia by populations even far from each other, as explained by research scientist Adrienne Mayor of Stanford University.³ Today, research is rediscovering these properties and their wider availability, thanks to new extraction and standardisation technologies. Products extracted from mountain plants can make a significant contribution towards protecting and controlling some of the focal points of human health, among which metabolic equilibrium, cardiovascular health, microcirculation, protection from free radicals, cancer prevention and even male and female libido.

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¹ C. Körner, "Mountain biodiversity, its causes and function: an overview", *Mountain Biodiversity*, 2019, 3-20.

² A. M. Hashim, B. M. Alharbi, A. M. Abdulmajeed, A. Elkelish, W. N. Hozzein, H. M. Hassan, "Oxidative Stress Responses of Some Endemic Plants to High Altitudes by Intensifying Antioxidants and Secondary Metabolites Content", *Plants*, 9, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3390/plants9070869>.

³ A. Mayor, "Animals self-medicate with plants – behavior people have observed and emulated for millennia", *The Conversation*, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/animals-self-medicate-with-plants-behavior-people-have-observed-and-emulated-for-millennia-229768>.



PARCO FLUVIALE
GESSO E STURA:
ESPERIENZA
DI NATURA

The f'Orma multi-sensory area offers the opportunity to engage in barefoot walking, a Nordic practice known for its various mind-body advantages. Andrea Bianchi, Italy's leading expert in the field, was in Cuneo with the River Park operators for some training activities.

"Walking barefoot offers a variety of benefits, such as enhancing posture and balance, as well as boosting blood circulation and regulating blood pressure.

One specific aspect relates to Earthing, the therapeutic practice described by Clint Ober that allows to connect to the Earth's electromagnetism. The act of connecting with the Earth directly through the feet serves as a universal remedy, as it readjusts the body's

positive electrical charge by coming into contact with the Earth's negative charge. By closing the electrical circuit, electrons can flow freely throughout the body, balancing out the positive charge and providing anti-inflammatory benefits for muscles and tendons. In any case, walking barefoot implies an increased level of focus, which has key psychological implications in terms of awareness of one's movement".

Another important aspect is the love for silence, which inspired the title of his book *Il silenzio dei passi* (The Silence of Footsteps): this practice allows for a profound reconnection with nature, through the soles of bare feet, and it's an experience that belongs to human prehistory and history.



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