TANAM TUMBUH
by Fahmi Mursyid

August - September 2025

Project Description :

TANAM TUMBUH is a site-specific and hybrid exhibition project that transforms the Goethe-Institut courtyard into a space for listening to the unseen rhythms of plant life. Through the use of a biodata sonification device, the bioelectrical activity of courtyard plants is translated into real-time MIDI signals and interpreted via modular and digital synthesizers. These signals become improvised sound compositions, where plants are treated not as silent objects but as responsive, living bodies in collaboration. Over several sessions, a series of audio recordings will be created, each one reflecting the interaction between a particular plant, its microenvironment, and the artist's responsive synthesis. Accompanying this sonic layer, collage-based photographs—assembled from textures, shadows, and patterns of the courtyard flora—will be altered algorithmically.

In an era of ecological collapse and digital saturation, this project seeks to foster intimacy with the nonhuman through sonic art and environmental listening. Plants constantly emit micro-electric impulses as part of their natural processes. Biodata sonification device detect these signals and convert them into MIDI data, which can be translated into musical parameters—pitch, rhythm, modulation, and more. In TANAM TUMBUH, these plant-generated signals become the starting point for live synthesizer compositions and recordings. Each session takes place in the Goethe-Institut courtyard, with a unique plant and spatial context. These compositions are not manipulated for musicality; rather, they represent an honest, improvised response to the plant's internal rhythms, changes in light, humidity, and subtle shifts in its environment. Parallel to the audio, photographs of each plant and its surroundings are collected and transformed into digital collages. These are then processed by a generative algorithm, resulting in visual works that evolve, layer, and distort in ways that mirror the living complexity of plant time.

All of these materials—audio tracks, generative collages, and explanatory texts—are embedded in a custom-built mobile web app. The app uses geolocation to limit access to visitors physically within the courtyard, ensuring that the experience remains grounded in site and place. The final work exists as a hybrid digital installation. A custom web application—accessible only within the courtyard through geolocation—acts as a portal. Through their smartphones, visitors will discover it. Rather than placing screens or speakers into the space, the project preserves the stillness and openness of the courtyard. Visitors are invited to slow down, move intuitively, and listen differently—to the subtle presence of vegetal life, to the courtyard's ambient histories, and to the unseen languages of nonhuman collaborators.