

Artistic Guide for Soil Scientists

by

Gerd Wessolek

Making the Invisible Visible: Urban Soil as Artistic Medium

This guide helps soil scientists discovering the artistic potential of urban soils, build cross-disciplinary dialogue, and create participatory artworks that raise awareness of urban soil's ecological, social, and historical dimensions.

1. Start with Soil as Story

Select urban sites such as parks, construction zones, vacant lots - and collect soil samples. Note GPS coordinates, land use, and personal observations. Photograph soil in situ and in hand. Goal: Treat each soil as a narrative fragment of the city!

2. Transform Soil into Art Material

Techniques:

- Soil Pigments: Use a binder to fix soil and artefacts on a canvas, combine it with colors.
- Soil Prints: Press and scratch moist soil onto paper or fabric.
- Soil Reliefs: Build textured maps with soil and natural glue.

Tip: Include scientific data (pH, color, texture) and comments within your artwork.

3. Explore the Urban Soil Biome

If available: Use portable microscopes to view soil life. Create:

- A 'Soil Life Gallery' with abstract and/or real sketches.
- Sound installations from soil interactions.

4. Co-Create with the Community

Workshop: 'Bring Your Soil'

Invite locals to share soils from their surroundings.

- Compare and map colors/textures.
- Paint a collective mural or mandala.

Purpose: Turn urban soils into a shared cultural and ecological archive.

5. Exhibit: Science Meets Art

Ideas for displaying your work:

- Outdoor pop-up exhibits.
- Paired displays: microscope imagery + abstract art.
- QR codes linking to soil data or stories.
- Use color and add poetry or reflections.



- The *Suitma 13-team* organize canvas (1 for each participant), adhesive, acrylic color, color spray, brushes, water, tables and seats (in consultation with me)
- The Urban-Soil-Art seminar starts with a short welcome and introduction by Gerd
- Then, the participants start working in small groups (3-4 persons) up to 2 hours
- At the end, a presentation and discussion of the artworks (with coffee and cake) up to 1,5 hours
- Have a creative atmosphere and fun!