I wonder if you might talk about your interest in the intersection of food and art as it relates to the work you have been doing over many years at the intersection of art and ecology? You joined forces with Patricia Watts to do curatorial work under the umbrella of ecoartspace. http://www.liptonarts.com/ecoart/

In my work both with ecoartspace and in my curatorial projects as an independent curator I have covered a wide range of environmental topics with artists encompassing various challenging issues including climate change, land use/sprawl, remediation, pollution, waste water, habitat loss, endangered species, energy use -and of course food and agriculture. My 2012 exhibition Ecovention, co-curated with Sue Spaid was my first large museum show with 32 artists including Brandon Ballengee, Betty Beaumont, Joseph Beuys, Jackie Brookner, Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), Mel Chin, Betsy Damon, Agnes Denes, Helen and Newton Harrison, Patricia Johanson, Ocean Earth Development Corporation/Peter Fend, Aviva Rahmani, Robert Smithson, Alan Sonfist, Superflex,  Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

<http://greenmuseum.org/c/ecovention/intro_frame.html>

Sue Spaid and I defined an Ecovention as (ecology + invention) to describe an artist-initiated project that employs an inventive strategy to physically transform a local ecology . From my perspective ecological issues are connected in a synergistic, inter-related way- all part of the web of life. Air and water quality (or lack of quality/pollution) impact soil quality and nutrition of food. Climate is taking a toll on everything from plants and trees moving to cooler elevations and how this impacts wildlife and humans. We have the decline of pollinators, pesticides and insect resistant genes bred into plants, etc... Warming oceans and overfishing have degraded the oceans dramatically. Mass killing of large predators such as wolves and bear cause over-population of deer and ruminants, which can decimate forests and lower canopy trees. Factory farms/feedlot breeding of animals causes manure pollution in water and the need for antibiotics in the animals, all washed down into our waterways and in our human digestion. The food chain determines the health of our planetary ecological system. Ecovention included several artists focused on some of these issues such as Ocean Earth (Peter Fend) on harvesting ocean algae for energy; Superflex did a bio-gas project for African villages without means to cook and Susan Steinman created a public permaculture garden growing food for the homeless and using salvaged materials in the outdoor plaza below the CAC. Georg Dietzler grew oyster mushrooms in the museum that remediated toxic soil and Mel Chin's *Revival Field* used plants called hyperaccumulators that were developed by USDA scientist Rufus Cheney to absorb heavy metals such as cadmium and lead out of the soil at a superfund site in Minnesota. Other artists in Ecovention such as Helen and Newton Harrison and Hans Haacke had been experimenting with water purification, soil, agriculture, breeding of shrimp, for many years beginning in the early 1970's.

And more recently you've realized two iterations of the exhibition "FOODshed: Art and Agriculture in Action" http://www.liptonarts.com/foodshed-at-cr10/

The original iteration of my exhibition F*OODshed: Art and Agriculture in Action* was at Franklin Street Works in Stamford, CT (2013). It was part of an exhibition titled Strange Invitation. Artist/upstate NY farmer Andrea Reynosa was invited to come up with a project and invited me to curate. That show, titled *Digging Deeper* included Reynosa, Habitat for Artists collaborative (greenhouses, rain barrel collection, hydroponics), Elaine Tin Nyo (goat cheese-making), Jenna Spevack (urban farming), Joan Bankemper (farming/raising animals/gardening) and Linda Weintraub (homesteading, canning food from her gardens). *Digging Deeper* was the pilot project that culminated in *FOODshed: Art and Agriculture in Action* at both Smack Mellon in Brooklyn 2014 and at CR10 in Hudson 2015. I added artists Tattfoo Tan (dehyrdrated food and survival issues), Bonnie Sherk(public food gardens and education), Peter Nadin (farmer/artist), Kristyna and Marek Milde (urban farming), Cary Peppermint and Leila Nadir (fermentation), Natalie Jeremijenko (edible flowers), Susan Steinman (heirloom apples), Joy Garnett (vinegar), Lenore Malen (beekeepers), Dan Devine (raising sheep)

<http://www.franklinstreetworks.org/?s=strange+invitation&submit=Search>

There were public art components in Brooklyn outside of Smack Mellon. Andrea Reynosa converted an abandoned (soon to be developed) waterfront lot into John Street Pasture  <http://johnstreetpasture.com/>   which she collaborated on with Brooklyn Grange and Alloy architects to plant a cover crop of Crimson Clover. At the end of the project goats were brought in from Queens Farm to eat the clover. Kristyna and Marek Milde had a community public art project at Old Fulton Street Plaza. *À la cart*, a temporary vegetable garden used shopping carts, soil and plants to create a participatory, edible workshop experiment. The gallery had their dinner table for a presentation platform and hub for gathering and talks on food and sustainability. The Mildes invited members of the local community to join the project and grow ingredients in the shopping carts for a single dish which was prepared at the end of the exhibition.

Other projects and workshops included Tattfoo Tan teaching participants “how to save surplus food by dehydrating vegetables and fruit. As climate change poses increasing threats to our agriculture, we can eliminate food waste by rethinking what produce should look like.” He shared creative techniques for salvaging deformed vegetables, which are transformed into beautiful meals.  *OS Fermentation: Collaborative Hacks* with *Fruits, Vegetables, and Microbes,* was a workshop with Leila Nadir + Cary Peppermint which took place during the opening to “revive the ancient, natural, sustainable rituals of microbiological fermentation that provided our human ancestors with a method of food preservation, diverse intestinal flora, and a visually striking unfolding of carefully managed decomposition and death.”

<http://smackmellon.org/index.php?cID=1333>

<http://www.cr10.org/EXHIBITIONS>

What was particularly interesting for you about exploring the territory of art and agriculture? How did that come about?

I became personally interested in agriculture when I moved out of NYC at the time of 9/11 and contemplated survival as a potential imminent reality. That rupture and the dislocation of my life post 9.11 and living in a quasi-rural area lead me to attempt gardening for the first time in my life. This was after 20 years as a city dweller with little regard or awareness as to where my food came from. After many years I am still a novice at growing food, but I have a greater understanding and respect for those that do this for a living and as an art form. My first food related/gardening curatorial project took place in 2009. I was invited by the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in Philadelphia to curate an exhibition on a large section their 450-acre nature preserve that had been farmland at one time and included a dilapidated 19th Century farmhouse. The fields had gone fallow from years of neglect and we decided to bring them back to life with 5 artists projects making use of the land. The artists were Susan Steinman (permaculture orchards), Habitat for Artists Collective (children's art and farm project), Joan Bankemper (medicinal herb garden), Ann Rosenthal and Steffi Domeke (American native plant garden) and Stacy Levy (Kept Out exclosure for deer)

<http://www.schuylkillcenter.org/art/?ha_exhibit=down-to-earth-artists-create-edible-landscapes>

Also my ecoartspace partner Patricia Watts had paved the way for me. She had already curated a few exhibitions on food in the S.F. Bay Area when she was curator at the Sonoma County Museum. *Hybrid Fields* took place in 2006 with artists Carol Selter

Christy Rupp, Free Soil, Free Fruit/Fruta Gratis, JohnKo Systems Unlimited/Old World Innovations, Laura Parker, Matthew Moore, Rachel Major, Marisa Jahn, Susan Leibovitz Steinman, Ted Purves and Susanne Cockrell, Wowhaus

<http://hybridfields.blogspot.com/>

And *Terroir, A Sense of Place* in 2009 at The Cheese Factory in 2011

<http://artatthecheesefactory.blogspot.com/2009/02/terroir-sense-of-place-coming-soon.html>

You've written a bit on the dichotomy of art as object -vs- art as experience in this territory. I wonder if you'd like to ruminate on that a little here as well?

Interestingly having worked initially as a dealer running a gallery, then a curator running a nonprofit I have covered the full spectrum of this dichotomy in terms of art as object vs. art as experience. At this point after being so focused for 15 years on art as process, I find myself working again (part time) for a commercial gallery in Chelsea. Artists have to live and those that make traditional objects and don't rely on academia or grants and public commissions need to sell their work. Its important for me to get beyond judgment and to accept that social practice/research/particpatory or collaborative art - is not for everyone. There is also something to be said for a solo contemplative practice. But it's no longer an either/or situation for me. Now it's whatever works to enable creative work to take place. It's all neccessary, it's all important and like ecological systems it's all connected.