

## **Accompanying text for art work by Marta De Menezes**

### **In the beginning there was Word**

The cover picture, with that weird, lovely growth sprouting from a sacred book, is part of a longer series of pictures of an experiment that was exhibited under the title “Where are you from?” Pictures 1 and 2 were taken by Marta De Menezes herself, pictures 3 and 4 are by Valentina Bonomonte. They are reprinted here with the kind permission of Claudia Cravero and Elisabetta Palaia of PAV – Living Art Park, Experimental Centre for Contemporary Art, Torino, Italy. [www.parcoartevivente.it](http://www.parcoartevivente.it).

Here are the words that go with the pictures:

### **Where are you from?**

2008

I come from a very ancient family going back thousands of years, since my ancestors were unicellular life beings. Through a slow evolutionary process, I come from basic biology, being today complex biology.

I come from a catholic family, as the majority of southern Europeans. I come from an education acquired in a catholic school run by Dominican Irish nuns. I come from a regular participation in catholic rituals and practises, in a country where religion has significant importance.

I come from one of the poorest and most beautiful regions of Portugal. I come from a place where extensive fields of crops meet the Atlantic ocean – where the waves in the fields mirror the waves in the sea.

I come from Art and I married Science.

*Marta de Menezes, September 2007*

In “Where are you from”, an exhibition curated by Lesley Wright

## **Tree of knowledge**

2004 – 2005

Here is another sample of Marta De Menezes' play with the two phenomena *Ecozon@* readers value so much: books and plant life, letters and wood, knowledge and trees. In Marta De Menezes' words:

The project *Tree of Knowledge* explores interactions between art and science by using novel cell imaging and tissue culture technologies in order to create live sculptures.

When creating a sculpture, the choice of medium is critical as it directly has an effect on how the sculpture is experienced. For example, the same object made of wood, stone or steel can have a different meaning, and can drive a different response in the beholder. When considering what would be the most adequate medium to represent the 3D structure of neurons, I concluded that I ought to use neurons themselves. By covering a scaffold with live neurons, or by filling glass tubes with these cells, one can achieve a representation of the delicate structure, maintaining the dynamic nature of a neuron: always changing, establishing new connections, eliminating old ones, growing, living. It is important to note that this strategy is not an attempt to represent reality as accurately as possible, but simply to explore the material that seems more adequate to represent such a living object. Such sculptures are a form of art that is literally alive.