

Creative Responses to Sustainability  
UK Green Guide



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**CREATIVE RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABILITY - UNITED KINGDOM GREEN GUIDE**  
**Cultural initiatives engaging with social and environmental issues**  
**United Kingdom Guide 1st edition, May 2021**

**Published by**

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)  
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 Singapore 119595  
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 www.ASEF.org

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ISBN: 978-981-14-9036-1



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Made possible by support from the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



**Invisible Flock** are an artist led, award-winning interactive arts studio based at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK, operating at the intersection of art and technology. Their studio is a sustainable laboratory space hosting their practice, collaborators and a rolling residency programme. They create highly sensory installations and environments that ask us to renegotiate our emotional relationship to the natural world. Their work explores the environmental crisis in all its forms, from ecosystem decline, biodiversity loss, climate justice and psychoterratic grief. They infiltrate many sectors aiming to have a creative impact on ecology, politics, health and society and to expose wherever possible that everything is fluid and can be rebuilt and reconfigured to be better. **invisibleflock.com**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

**Arts Council England** support Invisible Flock as a National Portfolio Organisation. Arts Council England are the national development agency for creativity and culture. **arts council.org.uk**





Sea Palling, Norfolk.  
Image by Anthony Pratt.

## PREFACE

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in partnership with Invisible Flock is delighted to launch a new Green Guide for the United Kingdom, the 8th in the series Creative Responses to Sustainability.

2020 will be forever remembered for the Covid-19 pandemic and the intensifying of the climate crisis. Never before has the relationship between nature and people been so important and yet so vulnerable. Unfolding around 4 main trends, Wellbeing, Climate Justice, Island Culture and Reciprocity, this UK Green Guide puts the spotlight on arts organisations and artists that through their work inspire and raise awareness on sustainability among different communities in the country. The artistic provocations and interventions gathered highlight in particular the power of the arts in creating a stronger and deeper connection between communities and their understanding of environmental and climate science. Thanks to the arts, concepts that can be perceived as abstract become part of people's everyday lives. Some of the case studies presented also show the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, where scientists, artists and communities collaborate, often in remote and rural areas of the country.

Invisible Flock's expertise working at the intersection of art and technology contributed greatly in setting the context and in giving voice to diverse arts practices, and thought-provoking approaches across the UK. What emerges is the instrumental role that artists play in inspiring, raising awareness and advocating for a better and more sustainable connection between people and their natural environment.

Since 2015, ASEF has been publishing the series Creative Responses to Sustainability through its arts website, [culture360.asef.org](https://culture360.asef.org). This series of country-specific guides looks at arts organisations and artists' initiatives that address issues of sustainability in their artistic practice in several countries of Asia and Europe. The previous Guides focused on Singapore (2015), Korea (2016) Indonesia (2017), Australia (2018),

Portugal and Spain (2019) with a spin-off in the series on the city of Berlin (2017).

Creative Responses to Sustainability builds on the discussions initiated by the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA)<sup>1</sup> since 2013 and previously, on ASEF's engagement with the topic of artists and climate change in global dialogues around environmental sustainability through its Connect2Culture programme (2008-2011).<sup>2</sup> Through this series, [culture360.asef.org](https://culture360.asef.org) continues to respond to the existing gaps in the information on arts & culture in Asia and Europe. In doing so, it also contributes to the Agenda 2030, particularly SDG 16.1 (access to information).<sup>3</sup>

We invite you to discover the UK Green Guide and we look forward to continuing this series with new inspiring initiatives connecting arts and environmental sustainability in Asia and Europe.

*Valentina RICCARDI*

*Associate Director Culture Department, ASEF*

*Singapore, April 2021*

*Valentina has worked in ASEF for over 12 years leading the culture360.asef.org programme since its inception. She is the editor of the series Creative Responses to Sustainability.*

1. Established in 2013, the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) is an informal network of 45 cultural organisations across Asia, Europe and Latin America contributing to environmental sustainability through their creative practice. For more information: <https://greenartlaballiance.com/>

2. Download the programme portfolio of Connect2Culture (2008-2011) at: <https://culture360.asef.org/resources/special-dossier-outlines-role-culture-tackling-global-issues>

3. Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements - <http://indicators.report/targets/16-10/>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who shared the intimacies and wisdom of their practice with us.

Thank you to Selina Nwulu who collaborated with Invisible Flock on the editorial development of the final draft as well as the collective articulation of the publication's intentions.

Thank you to Calum Perrin for their support developing an accessible design.

Thank you to Ama Josephine Budge, Angela Chan, Koumbah Semega-Janneh and Alberta Whittle for their honesty and guidance.

Thank you to Tatiana Garavito, Jennifer Katanyoutanant, Anna Lau and Dylan Yamada-Rice for their generous and critical friendship during the peer review process.



Sand Pilot (2012).  
Image by Invisible Flock.

## NOTES ON INTENTIONS

The articles and images in this publication were generated from a series of 30 conversations that took place between May 2020 - March 2021.

Our aim was to highlight a broad range of practices from across the UK. We approached individual artists, collectives and organisations whose core practice is grounded in sustainable, ecological, environmental and/or climate based understandings.

The publication consists of three main formats;

**Conversations** - drawn from interviews and presented in first person to provide an insight into practices and ideas at those moments in time.

**Creative Responses** - poetry, fiction, prose and imagery by commissioned artists responding creatively to a number of the questions being explored within the guide.

**Articles** - commissioned academic explorations focussing on the themes of Wellbeing, Climate Justice, Reciprocity and Island Culture.

We have intentionally not included the interview questions in order for the artist's voice to be foregrounded. The publication does absolutely not intend to gather a series of voices in agreement, at times positions or perspectives may feel conflicting. We wanted to embrace this messiness, to unravel a breadth of approaches to explore the challenges we all face making work in this field, whilst acknowledging the impossibility of whittling down a practice to a few pages and the contradiction of representing experiential work within a text based form.

This guide is not:

An A-Z of everyone making this type of work in the UK

A solution

Or a report

It is instead:

A snapshot

A patchwork collection of stories and practices

Within a moment in time

We sought to ask a number of questions, some begin to be answered within this publication, others not at all;

**How does a creative practice enable us to explore the immense complexities of our time?**

**Why do we make work about the natural world?**

**How does the use of cross-disciplinary methodologies have an impact in this field?**

**How are our personal identities entangled with time, history and land?**

**Are sustainability frameworks depoliticising the root causes of climate change and environmental disaster?**

**How can artists challenge the dominant discourse that the climate crisis is a new crisis instead of one inflicted by colonisation, racial genocide and limitless growth?**

**How might artistic practices help foreground the voices of those leading the visioning and building of new worlds free of the violence of capitalism?**

**What critical frameworks are needed to ensure collaborations are meaningful, ethical and reciprocal?**

**How do we as artists hold spaces that contain pain, friction and grief?**

**What is an arts institution's responsibility to human and planetary health?**

**Can we think about technologies as tools for sustainable change and at the same time as tools created from extracted minerals, used to make harmful practices of extraction more efficient?**

**How do we navigate the dichotomy of responding to urgency within a world in crisis and the need to relearn slowness and prioritise degrowth?**

**Are individual artists, as opposed to institutions, more able to intimately interrogate these large, complex and urgent questions?**

We imagined this publication to be experienced slowly; dipped in and out of and returned to, rather than read in a linear way. We hope that this is just the beginning of these conversations, that the publication can provoke ongoing discussion and a shared collection of ideas that can be built further and taken in many new directions.

We stress the semantic inflection that this is "A" not "The" Green Guide and that by the time we write this sentence, it is already out of date. We want to thank everyone who helped us reach the featured artists, this was a large joint effort by all contributors, and we feel this generosity deeply.

Please email us to propose artists or organisations that should be included in future iterations; flock@invisibleflock.com

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“When future generations look back upon the Great Derangement they will certainly blame the leaders and politicians of this time for their failure to address the climate crisis. But they may well hold artists and writers to be equally culpable – for the imagining of possibilities is not after all, the job of politicians and bureaucrats.”



\*warbiter cricket



\*cicada

Reciprocity

Climate Justice

Island Culture

Wellbeing







## Prologue / Ama Josephine Budge

Author's Note: Words by Ama Josephine Budge transcribed by Alberta Whittle at the request of the author as an inscription of their love for one another and for "the work."

Images by Alberta Whittle, stills from artist film RESET (2020)  
©AlbertaWhittle

This was hard to write. As I wake up morning after morning to more stories of Black death, Black murder; stories of new pipelines, and more oil spills, of unending droughts whilst governments continue to waterboard the earth; stories of the failed crops we all knew would come, but could never prepare for their arrival; of Black and brown bodies piled on roadsides across the Global south and nailed into nameless pine boxes on Hart island at the hands of this so called pandemic, which is really a complete systemic failure, a government funded fuck-you to its people; certain peoples; my people; it's hard to write about other futures, and other ways of being, of utopic possibilities in which art transforms white supremacist, patriarchal, extractive global neo-colonialist capitalism into interspecies codependency. This was hard to write. I am all out of stories.

This is not because I no longer believe in these futures, in their desperately pumping hearts. But it is perhaps because, like anyone who's messed with time travel and multiple temporal lines of reality knows, the more you fuck up in the past, the slimmer and slimmer the probabilities of those futures where the currency is hope, abundance and possibility, as opposed to depression, scarcity and inevitable failure, become. Climate activists like to say, we are running out of time. I don't think there was ever a time when climate colonialism: the unfettered draining and decimation of all after life at the hands of enslaved labour, upon violently stolen and occupied lands, the epistemological and ontological genocide of indigenous lifeways globally, the subsequent industrial revolution and establishment of trans-oceanic white supremacist capitalism that finally resulted in terrestrial wounds so cataclysmic that we had to pay attention and call it something, call it climate change - I don't think there was ever a time when climate colonialism was going to amount to anything other than destruction, and death. I think "time" stopped being on our side the moment our species made a choice that many of us, to differing degrees, with differing levels of consent, continue to make everyday. And I don't know that art can change that anymore.

I'm not saying it can't. I'm saying the percentile probabilities of those futures are decreasing at a rate that even time cannot stall.

This text then, pulled out of me like blood transfusions, may be more of a reckoning, than the presentation of a reality that imagines other possible ways of being. If we know that transformative climate justice requires, at its heart, undeniably and irrevocably the immediate and all-encompassing relinquishment of power, resources and capital of commercial energy companies and their subsidiaries - which include the large European arts institutions whom they fund and who in turn support many European artists to live - then I think that maybe, arts role in this socio-political context may be to prepare us for that divestment. To prepare, encourage, support, guilt-trip, pressure and guide us towards letting go. The role of art may also most definitely be to imagine new futures, but those futures will most likely not include humanity as we know it, if those futures want to survive.

\*



## Island

What does it mean to be born an island? They say we are contrary by nature: ever moving, ever-anchored, ever lost, always entirely unmappable. But we think this myth is born of a species that do not understand duality; fluctuation; tides; flow.

In YtiliBissôp all the islands are sentient. We weren't always. For almost an age, we forgot that we could talk. That we could scream. So when they burned our backs and picked away at our flesh with iron needles like a thousand rotting splinters, when we were suffocated with a greying second skin, even when they poured their excess into the oceans until our very fingers were burned, bleached and crumbled away; we were silent. We forgot that we could cry out. Could rise up. Could fight back. We forgot that we were sacred.

It was not a simple thing, this forgetting. Not a trick of time or a predisposition toward infirmity, not a cost of age, nor a flood of universal inconsequence. It was a deliberate act. It was done to us. Slowly, over millennia, so that we no longer knew that which we know. So that we were no longer even ourselves, and no longer wanted to be much of anything, if it could be said we wanted at all.

Oh how we we loved them when first they landed on our shores in their gleaming metal wombs. They spoke with us in reverence, in awe and admiration. We shared stories of our travels: things we'd seen, places we had breathed, the tears we'd wept at the bright green of a sunrise, at the birthing of new worlds. Eventually they lay with us too, they taught us pleasures yet undiscovered, they bore us fleshy, two-legged children who carried our names but not our predisposition for memory. Generations changed their blood in a way it could not change ours, and once they saw all that we could be when angered, when risen, they became afraid. And fearful animals are quick to anger, and slow to forgiveness.

But just as seas know not the circumference of sand as they are shaping it, they did not know what the violence of our undoing would do to them too. So they forgot the ways of the sea and how to build their metallic wombs, they forgot to read the stars and the sunsets, and how to turn to all sentient life as teachers. In dislocating who we were, they lost themselves as well. And for that heinous crime, we may all pay with our lives.

Asaase

We call her Asaase Yaa: this land made up of our bone matter, blood matter, green matter, Black matter.

Her voice has gotten hoarse now. Hoarse from screaming so loud. From protesting with her roots, her fingers, her backs, her seamen, her spittle, her platelets, her pores. But some of us still listen. Some of us collect the seeds and sow the looms weaving Otherwise into being, one thread at a time. Otherwise, otherways. Some of us remember.

I dream of it, that Other place, older and newer at once. A future place? No. That is a nonsense. Here time is marked only by the growth and death of things, not by what passes out of memory. Asaase is there. And now she only sings. But the rasps of our violence, our forced hand and our foolish forgetting remain; traumatising the exquisite. I lay on a blanket of midnight stars and first time lovers that do not hurt or scare or hold down. I am become a blanket of midnight stars and first time lovers whose cries are ecstasy or kindness or care made light, made sound, made spirit. I wake in that place with soil on my tongue and forgiveness crammed under my fingernails in place of anxious despair. I look back at us here, in this place, as though through a mirror or a stagnant stinking pool tinged with decay and loss. Sometimes I want to go back, to do more, to change the odds somehow, to increase our chances at making it, at re-earning our right to be on this planet. Sometimes I want to go back and dance low and thighs wide until my sweat is a rivulating river of R&B and hip hop madness, wild and free and healing. Sometimes I want to go back and tell myself: you are everything. You have everything. We can make it. Sometimes I believe we can. Sometimes I see the decomposition of these crutches of consumerism and dehumanisation, leaving a blackened field fertilised and grieving for life. Sometimes I see the weapons lowered, the clenched fists raised, the killing stops and we are finally allowed to die with dignity and fecundate this sacred soil, this land made up of our bone matter, blood matter, green matter, Black matter.

‘For once they intuited that the human will was long intent on capture, they all conspired to rest their Truth everywhere. And in the simplest of things. Like a raindrop. And therefore the most beautiful of things, so that Truth and Beauty would not be strangers to one another, but would reply one on the other to guide the footprints of the displaced, and those who chose to remain put; of those only once removed and those who had journeyed far in the mistaken belief that books were the dwelling place of wisdom; those who thought that the lure of concrete would replace or satisfy the call of the forest; those who believed that grace was a preoccupation of the innocent and the desire to belong a craving of the weak.’

M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing* (2005)

## Thames

If I could breathe, I might hear my sisters screaming.  
 If I could breathe. If I could breathe I might spilloth  
 over, swallowing up London Bridge, and the Houses of  
 Parliament in my wrath, in my rage, in my grieving.

They used to pull rubber soles, and bottle tops, and  
 tampons and a myriad of plastic contortions out of my  
 body and pile them high and shape them anew and call  
 them art and beg for my emancipation. People would come  
 from all over to see this great tribute that protested my  
 repeated violation. They would come in cars and on trains  
 and in airplanes to bear witness. Half a century later, when  
 that day was long forgotten, the metal of their bones and  
 plastics in their organ linings would find their way back  
 into my body. One way or another.

If I could breathe, I might make of this grey manipulated  
 sand a world of green and mulch and riverbank. Might  
 make a world anew, and only those that honoured the  
 smallest of my microbes, my wormlife, mudlife, nematode-  
 disco-twerklife would be allowed to remain. To make  
 home. To home make. To earn home. To remember how to  
 breathe. Oh how I remember...

‘From the north end of Waterloo Bridge where we were stationed this time, one was able to look along the top of the wall, with the water running high on one side of it, and, to the other, the roadway of the Embankment, with the street lamps still burning there, but not a vehicle or a human figure to be seen upon it. Away to the west the hands on the Parliament clock-tower crawled round the illuminated dial. The water rose as the big hand moved with insufferable sloth up to eleven o’clock. [...]The people about us craned their necks, and murmured again. A moment later we saw the water coming.’

John Wyndham, *The Kraken Wakes* (1953)

The main question for me with emergent strategy [is] how do we improve relationships with each other, as well as improve how we are in relationship to the planet. If we can do these two things, we may stand a chance of earning our place on the planet.

adrienne maree brown, *Earning Our Place on the Planet: An Interview with adrienne maree brown* (2018)

## Outpost

We may be the last of the people who remember, who want to remember, who are willing to bear the agony of the remembering in our bodies. We may be the last of the people who can breathe underwater; who can thrive in the deserts; whose blood runs hot in the tundra and cool in the equatorial rainforest. We may be the last people: a bouquet of oracles, truthsayers and medicine womxn – vessels of our nations, the memory keepers. We may be the last people this world will permit to survive should we prove ourselves worthy, should we prove that we can change, that we can remember Other ways.

We commune in highlands, on mountaintops, from the roofs of swallowed skyscrapers and the arid concave mouths of canyons our ancestors remember as rivers. We commune with all that is, and with each other, we coordinate. We have taken the best of technology and the crafts, we live now in abundance. In the mornings we work, we make, we transform, we cultivate, we harvest, we walk and sing and marvel at the great beauty of our alter-life kin. In the afternoons we rest, and mediate and make love to heal the wounds of our inherited souls. In the evenings we commune, and we feast and we rest some more. We live almost without waste, and that which we make we transform into art or offerings. We remember.

We may be the last outpost, and there may not be another. Our books and our bones might be all that's left, and eventually only our dust, and that will be just fine.

A systemically short memory, may prove to be the greatest tool of this system under which we cannot breathe, and as such, the mean the end of not just the human species, but so much more life, life we have not even deigned to name, let alone to remember.

Ama Josephine Budge (2020)





## Solastalgia

Land Body Ecologies Group /  
Dr Ayesha Ahmad, Invisible Flock,  
Kaisa Kerätär, Quicksand, Samrawit  
Gougsa, Sheila Ghelani.



Northern Finland.  
Image by Kaisa Kerätär

\*netwinged  
beetle

OUR STARTING POINT AS A GROUP has been the term Solastalgia<sup>1</sup>. Solastalgia was coined by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht in 2005 to describe the emotional state of residents in New South Wales experiencing the impacts of large scale coal mining taking place on their land. It is described as a feeling of distress and of feeling paralysed, powerless to prevent, slow or protect home-lands from environmental changes taking place<sup>2</sup>. Unlike Eco-Anxiety<sup>3</sup> which relates to the sense of global dread and lack of control over the *current and predicted future state of human-induced climate change*,<sup>4</sup> Solastalgia is rooted in a *lived experience of place* and bound within how one defines their home, their land and identity<sup>5</sup>.

While solastalgia can apply to anyone experiencing changes to their home environment, indigenous people and individuals whose cultural identity is entirely bound to the land are perhaps most affected because of their deep connections to their homelands, their practical knowledge and intimate day to day interaction with land: hunting, fishing, foraging - connections to generations of passed family members and themselves. Discussing this with two collaborators they drew upon personal examples of this connection.

Yorkshire, UK.  
Image by Victoria Pratt



Kaisa: There are so many words and idioms connected to the forest and land - the verb metsittyä originates from the word metsä (forest). It means that after spending enough time in a forest, you start to look like, smell like, sound like a forest itself. For me this verb has a very positive and relaxing meaning, and it means that when I return back to the civilized, urban world, I may have shaggy hair with some twigs and leaves and smoky smelling clothes after spending nice moments by open fire in the forest. I feel very peaceful and balanced. (Google translate reverts to forest as a translation to metsittyä)

The other word which pops into my mind is noun kisura. It is used in my dialect (east part of Lapland) and I can use it for both young reindeer calf and a child as a toddler, both full of life and energy.

Siwakorn: In the Karen community each person has their individual spirit tree. When each new baby is born their umbilical cord is placed in a bamboo box tied to a chosen tree. The father takes the box and chooses a strong, tall tree. This tree becomes the spirit tree of the baby and there is a bond with nature formed at that moment, the tree and baby live their lives side by side. The tree is still cared for by the community even after death. Land doesn't belong to us - we belong to the land.

Kaisa Kerätär is a curator and expert on Northern Finnish culture, art and design, with roots in Finnish Lapland, both Sami and Finnish culture.

Siwakorn Odochao is a Pgak'yau (Karen) farmer and coffee producer in the Ban Nong Tao community, active in rotational farming and pollination projects around Northern Thailand.

Such narrative concepts illustrate that land reaches beyond the margins of traditional paradigms of understanding the boundaries of the body and of the land. Through an embodied notion of the land, it can be seen, then, that land can also be harmed in ways that the body experiences harm, and that this harm, can constitute an act of violence. Such actions of violence against the land need to be formulated and developed further into our discourses for understanding Solastalgia.

Defining violence is a normative interaction between a cause and an effect of harm. The 1996<sup>6</sup> World Health Assembly recognises violence as a public health issue, and whilst there are regions of the world with extremely high prevalences of violence, with no area immune from violence, the recognition of the impact of violence through a health-orientated lens helps to bring the suffering into public health discourses. However, there does remain limitations with current definitions of violence, which prioritise harm of bodies, including harm to oneself through suicide, or harm to one another. In other words, there is a bracketing out of understanding of harm to non-bodily entities through actions that would be deemed as violent if perpetrated towards another human being. For example, actions towards the land are not considered an act of violence in contemporary health discourses, even though land may be embodied or symbolise a body through the existences of those individuals or communities that shape their lives, and deaths, through a relationship with the land. The linguistic phenomenon of the way that the words soil and soul are so closely mirrored is one solid and founding root of why land is vulnerable to violence, and why those living, or dying, on the land, suffer. As we move forward in our understanding of violence, and the impact of shifting landscapes on mental health, we will also deepen our notion of land-trauma and broaden the need for health responses to violence to include violence towards the body of land.

To consider land through the lens of late stage capitalism is to understand land as colonised, land as asset, as property, as holder of value to be traded. Land as a resource to be exploited and used. Land as surface above the rocks and metals that drive our modern world. Land as public, as leisure, belonging to all and protected through fragile laws, land as nature, as wilderness belonging to no one. Land as finite, depleted, under water. Land as over there, as something you will never own.

Through these different modalities we can try and understand cause and effect. A chemical plant poisoning a river which leads to birth defects in local newborns presents us with a clear cause and effect. The person in the factory responsible for pushing the button that opens the sluice gate that releases the chemicals into the river, they must be to blame. But perhaps when asked they point to the line manager, who under pressure to save time or money told them to flush chemicals into the river rather than dispose of them properly. But perhaps in turn when asked they point to the factory boss who cut corners to meet a quarterly target. They in turn point to the board of directors who meet in the capital city hundreds of miles from the river where the chemicals are poured in. These directors in turn point to the shareholders and funds who expect a return on their investments and for whom the chemicals the company makes are an abstraction, let alone the factory floor, its outflow pipes and the river. The investment funds in turn point to individuals whose retirements are financed by these same shares and perhaps some of them living near or in a town that the river in question flows through, and on and on and on. Although here there is a clear effect we can already see how complex the cause becomes in an interlocking system where land is affected by the choices of those who are able to choose, thousands of individuals all abstracted out by our global financial systems.

The effect of these actions on our theoretical river remain physical. But what if instead of birth defects the river poisoned the fish that live in it causing the local fishing economy that villagers relied on to collapse, is this violence greater or less when its effects are on the livelihood of a community, a violence both ecological and financial. Or what if instead the pollution caused trees and vegetation that bordered the river to die, turning the land surrounding into a wasteland, and what if this wasteland was the ancestral hunting grounds for a variety of local communities, and when the birds and other megafauna left these communities were left both without a primary source of nourishment and also culturally destitute. Is the violence here enacted upon the trees and wildlife, is it enacted upon the river itself, the people of the communities who live alongside it, or is it enacted on their past, their ancestors, or onto their children's future; or perhaps it is that we cannot separate these layers, that it is the composite of them all that make the land. Or what if the river becomes toxic only to the point where stepping into it causes rashes and blisters, rendering the religious practices of a large community dangerous or impossible, meaning they can no longer pray or bury their dead, and if this is not violence then I don't know another word to describe the destruction of so much; violence enacted through the land and out onto the bodies on which it depends.

Finally then what if we were not talking about the output of a single theoretical sewer pipe but instead the sum total of the outflow of our species' consumption, what if instead of being able to lay the blame at the foot of sluice gate operator we instead had to look all around us, to the largest corporate entities, all the way to the screen on which this is being read, to the food that is giving you the energy to read it, to ourselves and to others who we love, and what then if we try and trace that cause and effect. We would, I suspect, find ourselves endlessly entangled with one another and to be entangled does not implicitly suggest consent, nor does it absolve guilt.



Norfolk, UK.  
Image by Anthony Pratt



Devarayanadurga, India.  
Image by Babitha George

In this vastness one can feel powerless, perhaps feel solastalgia or grief, pain or something for which there is no language.

Through stories we can understand value from an existential perspective, and create *a space for sharing grievances, moments of hope and strength*<sup>7</sup>. With around half of the world's languages having no written form, art can act as a vehicle to bring forward alternative modes of expression not limited to human speech. Our approach is not to tell one story but to tell multiple stories at once with the hope that through this process of entanglement, the solutions, answers, meanings, are conjured collectively, in the act of listening and retelling. Collaborating to bring together lived experiences and multiple perspectives to collectively reflect/ask/uncover what our future relationship with these ecosystems should be and to action/trial/respond through artistic responses and frameworks. To explore what it means to be a part of these global ecosystems and to understand our relationship with them from the perspective of care, reciprocity and building systems of shared knowledge. It is perhaps through this that we may reach multiple solutions, a thousand threads of connection that we didn't know existed.

*... A story is a wild animal, it has tusks, udders; it's got a tail... it won't behave for your polemic.*<sup>8</sup>

1. Albrecht GA .Solastalgia: a new concept in human health and identity.PAN (Philosophy, Activism, Nature)
2. The Lancet's 2015 Health and Climate Change report discusses how solastalgia is connected to 'dis-ease,' or a lack of ease due to a hostile environment that a person is powerless to do anything about.
3. Oxford Languages, 2020 Oxford University Press
4. Clayton, S., Manning, C. M., Krygsmann, K., & Speiser, M. (2017). Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance. Washington, D.C. American Psychological Association, and ecoAmerica.
5. Mapping the Solastalgia Literature: A Scoping Review Study, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, p2
6. World report on violence and health: summary. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002
7. Siwakorn Odachao.
8. Mud and Antler Bone, An Interview with Martin Shaw, Emergence Magazine.

Since early 2019 the **Land Body Ecologies Research Group** has been working together to explore the relationship between mental health and ecosystem health. Our group is a multidisciplinary team bridging but not limited to psychology, arts, sustainability, sociology, design and medicine. We have come together through the belief that to better understand the impacts of environmental change on mental health this conversation needs to happen in a global intersectional space, in direct collaboration with those with lived experience of environmental changes to their land historically and currently.

Solastalgia is a project led by the Land Body Ecologies Group; Ayesha Ahmad, Invisible Flock, Kaisa Kerätär, Quicksand, Samrawit Gougsa and Sheila Ghelani. The project has been shortlisted for a Wellcome Trust Hub Award.

### Solastalgia

What solace can be found from living in a crumbling skeleton?  
Ghost towns and villages that have lost their skins to the atmosphere.  
It is grief that will turn us into living memorials of our fallen landscapes,  
given we do not yet have words for the eulogy, we might well embody our loss.  
Like this, we will become a drought when there is no clean water,  
our skin parched like abandoned land, faces dull and ready for wildfire.  
When the crops fail, our limbs will wilt like stalks giving up, our hair imitate the weeds.  
It is perhaps the earthquakes that will crack open our chests, help us  
understand how we, the living, show love in the aftershocks.

Selina Nwulu

## Its About Being Held

Nwando Ebizie

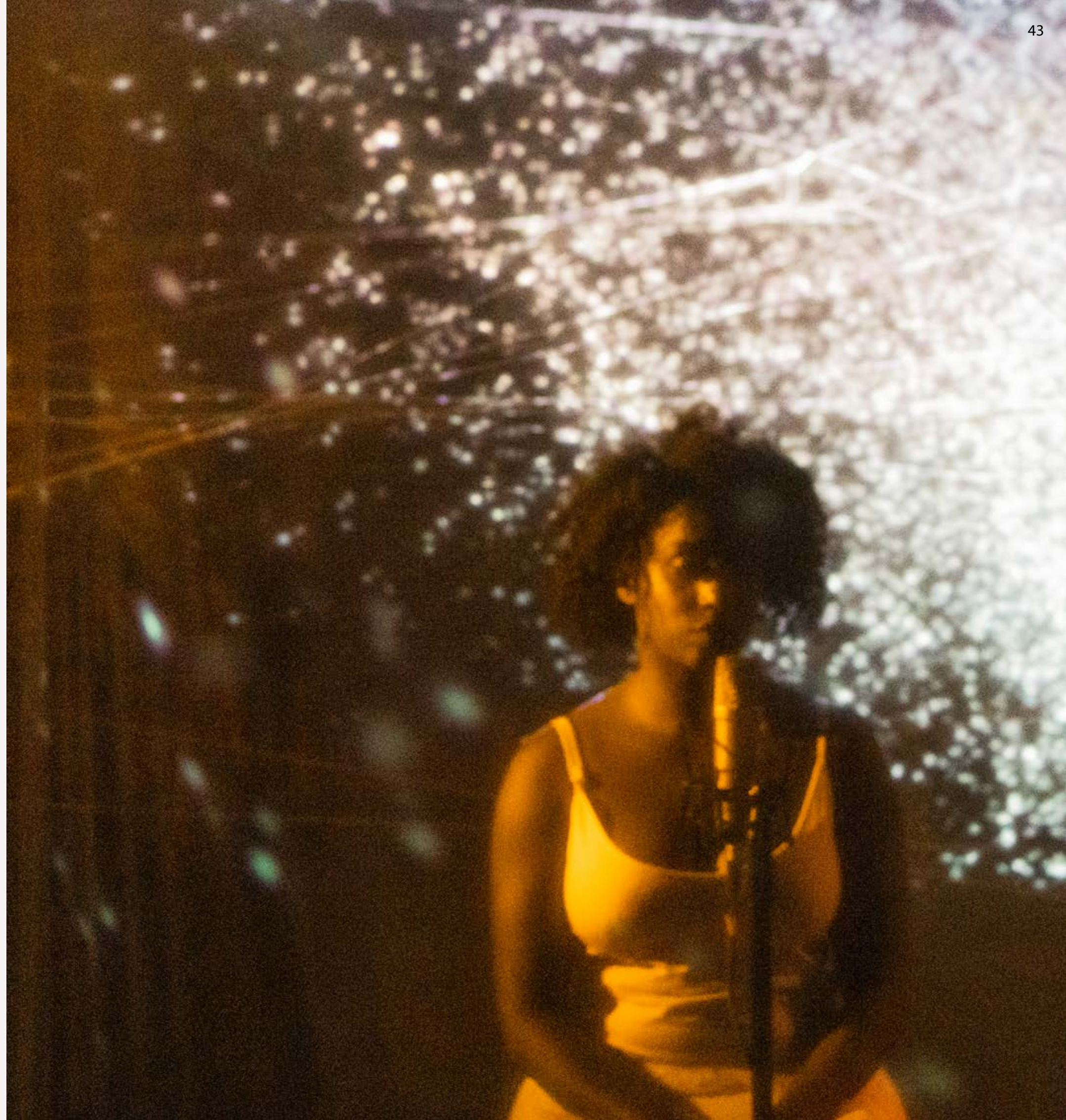
**18/02/2021 12:07 - 13:07**

**Nwando Ebizie** is a constellation point for a spectrum of multidisciplinary works that call for RADICAL change.

She challenges her audience to question their perceived realities through art personas, experimental theatre, neuroscience, music and African diasporic ritualistic dance. Carving out her own particular strand of Afrofuturism, she combines research into the neuroscience of perception (inspired by her own neurodiversity) and an obsession with science fiction with a ritualistic live art practice.

Works include her immersive sensory environment *Distorted Constellations*, her pop persona *Lady Vendredi* (a blaxploitation heroine from another dimension!) and the building of her long-term operatic experience, *Hildegard: Visions*. This award winning work has toured across the world. She has performed in Tokyo (Bonobo), Rio de Janeiro (Tempo Festival), Berlin (Chalet), Latvia (Baltais Fligelis Concert Hall) and Zurich (Blok) as well as across the UK from Home MCR to the Barbican and Southbank Centre.

*Distorted Constellations* by Nwando Ebizie  
Image by Jacob Hulmston





Distorted Constellations by Nwando Ebizie  
Image by Jacob Hulmston

I'M UNSATISFIED WITH THE WAY THINGS are. We have an insane impact on this planet and that is very much to do with the inherent way we've evolved as humans, the way that our species works, the way our brains work. Art and culture is a way in, of making an impact on the way we do things, and the way we think, the way we perceive reality. I'm interested in behaviour change, in a phenomenological kind of cognitive sense. I'm interested in perception, I'm interested in the inner world; inside the perceptive bubble, which is the human and the brain, and I'm interested in the outside of that, the wider world, and all the interconnections between those things.

I'm Igbo, which is a people from what is called Nigeria. I didn't grow up in Nigeria. When I first went back to my village I saw my grandfather's house that he built, which was the first concrete house in the village (so very impressive when it was first built). But it represents the progress that was sold to the people - *this is the next step, this is evolution, this is progress, this is civilization*. The village is this beautiful place, with pineapple trees, banana trees, and palms everywhere. But when you tear down all the forest that's there and you get these disgusting materials, you put them in the earth and you teach people to forget, forget not only about their original ways of building houses, but also to disregard them, to disparage them. Original houses were like cob houses and my parents were taught to call them mud huts - "cob house" sounds really different from "mud hut". This is a way of colonising people; to remove their culture, to make their culture lesser than and to impress upon them that your culture is superior. And then you get them to buy into that culture, to forget about and not pass on; to cut off the limbs of their ancestry.

I'm interested in what's been lost as well as what's not been lost and what we can still connect to. One of the flaws in our global minority culture and the separation of science and technology from arts and culture and ritual practice, is that when you look at certain cultures, where those have stayed intertwined there's an inherent understanding and working with the nonhuman world in a sustainable way. The Khasis, an indigenous hill tribe from the state of Meghalaya live in the monsoon region in India. They build living root bridges which are the only bridges able to withstand monsoon rains, are a good example. The technology is generational, it doesn't work just in your single generation, there's an expanding and understanding of the importance of things working over time. Understanding more about timescales seems to be a real problem for us, we can't even think about if you do austerity now; in five years, obviously people are going to be fucked. Let alone if I plant this seed now; in 200 years, my great grandchildren will have a bridge; working on non human timescales.

So there's the technology, but there's also the culture, the storytelling. The living root bridge is connected within their myths. I think we've got a bit of a problem in our culture with focussing on religion being real or not real, rather than what is the important knowledge that's being passed down in the myth. Whether or not you literally believe it or not, there is this important knowledge being passed down, knowledge of how to behave and how to treat the ecosystem. From there, you get the rituals connected to the myths; the rituals about sustaining the ecological system and sustaining the people. That's something that we've lost and that's one of the reasons why I'm interested in communal rituals; the technology, the myth, the ritual and the culture and how that's all connected.





Hildegard Visions by Nwando Ebizie  
Image by Claire Shovelton

Reflecting on my neurodiversity I can see why ritual is something that really works for me, embodied practice is really fundamental because concepts, ideas, feelings are physicalized in three dimensional space and physicalized within my body.

As an artist, I'm interested in creating an effect and moving people. I'm interested in creating intimacy. It's something that in our society we don't have enough of. There's a real porntification of intimacy in our society and a fear of intimacy on the other side, intimacy is really confused with sex. There's lots of reasons why people are afraid of intimacy but we need more of it. I think it can work towards creating sympathy and empathy, and can improve our daily lives and our societies and our culture. That's what I want to create in my work and I think that might be one of the reasons why I do what I do; to create intimate experiences and to create numinous experiences. Numinous experiences which can help people experience something outside of themselves, regardless of their belief system. Creating connections in a disconnected world, creating great feelings.

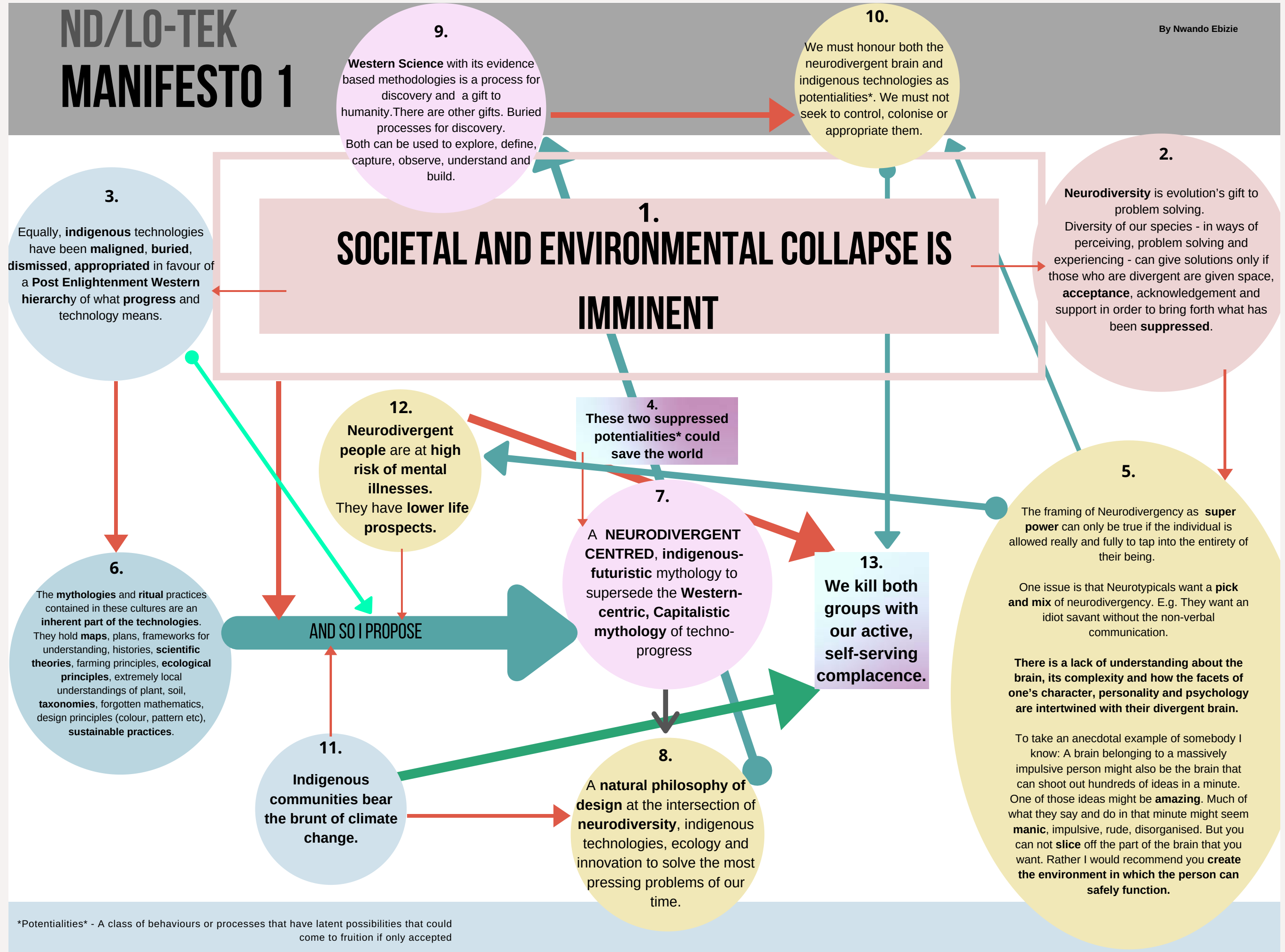
I'm interested in transformation ritual, in the life - death - life cycle, as opposed to the phallic straight line idea of life and advancement. I think that we're disconnected from death in an unhealthy way, in the same way that we're disconnected from intimacy. And that makes death a taboo. The kind of rituals that deal with death are renewing and connect back to a biophilic perspective on things. You have to understand the cyclical nature of the ecosystem you're living in and work with that.

I have built structures and processes, learning from ritual cultures and visual cultures around myself. My main interests are the ancestral ritual cultures of the black Atlantic; Vodou in Haiti, Candomblé in Brazil, Santeria in Cuba, Vodun in Benin and many others. They have built within them structures of care and Vodou is a very misunderstood spiritual practice. I think the only way to research is to engage with them and it makes sense to me, because I feel an ancestral link. One of the main concepts is called Yanvalou which has a rhythm and a dance, and is part of many ceremonies. It's the enacting of a wave, the universal wave that connects everything; the infinite serpent and the movement that opens Vodou ceremonies. It's a movement that is very health giving, undulating the spine.

I spent a lot of time researching practices that hold me and heal me. Again, thinking about the Vodou ceremonies, they have openings and closings and the idea of opening and closing in my practice is really important so that it doesn't spill out into everything else, which it does, but just because it does doesn't mean I can't still keep on trying. All of these ritual cultures are very connected to the earth and the elements. The idea of ritual rather than performance holds me because as a black femme woman, being onstage, quite often for an all white audiences, thinking of it as a performance feels quite othering and what I'm more interested in is creating a space where there's celebrant and participants. So that holds me and helps me keep it within a safer space for myself. But fundamentally, it's about being held.

# ND/LO-TEK MANIFESTO 1

By Nwando Ebizie



\*Potentialities\* - A class of behaviours or processes that have latent possibilities that could come to fruition if only accepted

## Nwando Ebizie's Ecological Manifesto

Plainer more understandable text

\*Potentialities\* - A class of behaviours or processes that have latent possibilities that could come to fruition if only understood

1. Societal and environmental collapse is imminent
2. Neurodiversity is evolution's gift to problem solving. Diversity of our species - in ways of perceiving, problem solving and experiencing - can give solutions only if those who are divergent are given space, acceptance, acknowledgement and support in order to bring forth what has been suppressed.
3. Equally, indigenous technologies have been maligned, buried, dismissed, appropriated in favour of a Post Enlightenment Western hierarchy of what progress and technology means.
4. These two suppressed potentialities could save the world
5. The framing of Neurodivergency as super power can only be true if the individual is allowed really and fully to tap into the entirety of their being. One issue is that Neurotypicals want a pick and mix of neurodivergency. E.g. They want an idiot savant without the non-verbal communication.

There is a lack of understanding about the brain, its complexity and how the facets of one's character, personality and psychology are intertwined with their divergent brain. To take an anecdotal example of somebody I know: A brain belonging to a massively impulsive person might also be the brain that can shoot out hundreds of ideas in a minute. One of those ideas might be amazing. Much of what they say and do in that minute might seem manic, impulsive, rude, disorganized. But you can not slice off the part of the brain that you want. Rather I would recommend you create the environment in which the person can safely function.

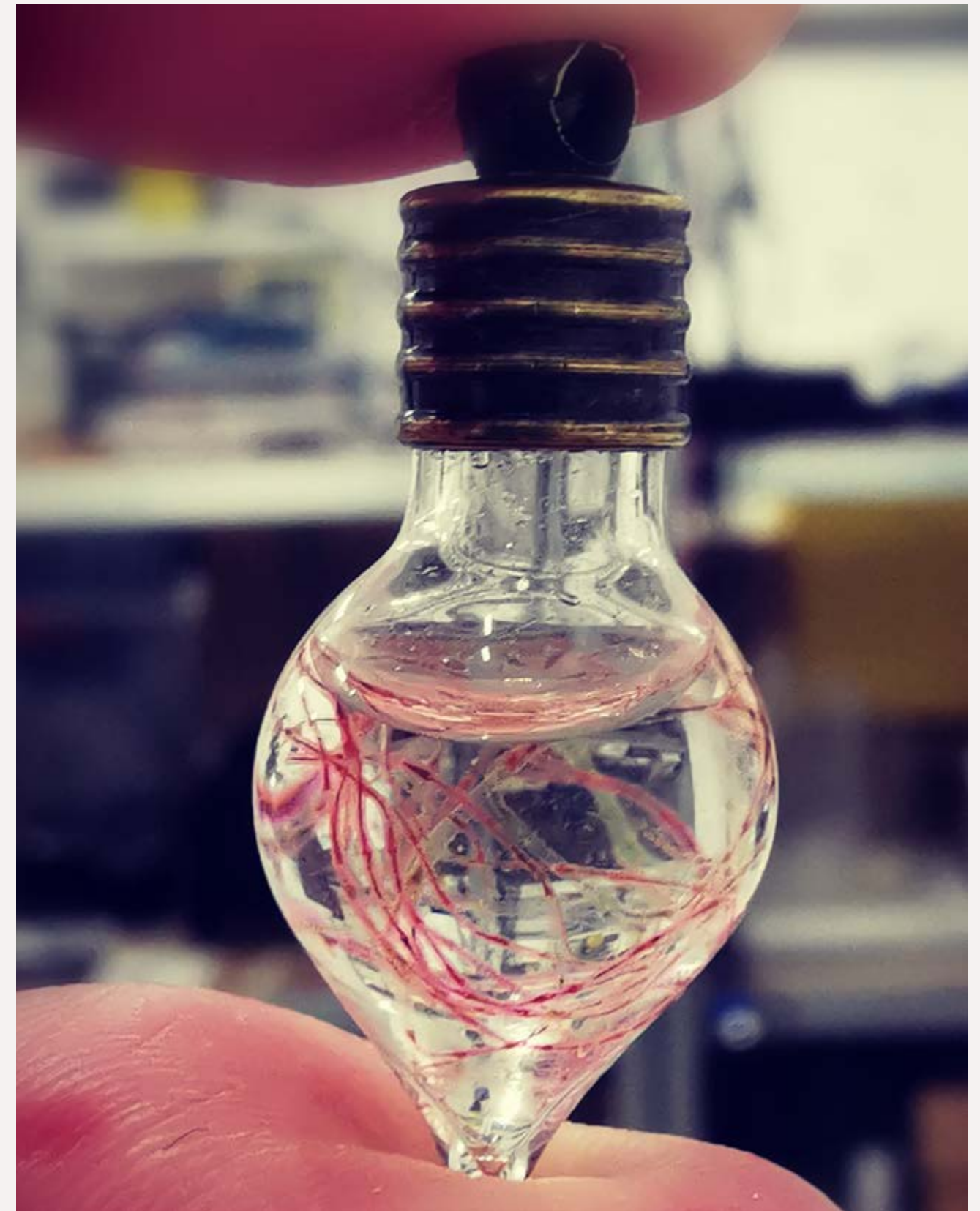
6. The mythologies and ritual practices contained in these cultures are an inherent part of the technologies. They hold maps, plans, frameworks for understanding, histories, scientific theories, farming principles, ecological principles, extremely local understandings of plant, soil, taxonomies, forgotten mathematics, design principles (colour, pattern etc), sustainable practices.
7. And so I propose a NEURODIVERGENT CENTRED, indigenous-futuristic mythology to supersede the Western-centric, Capitalistic mythology of techno-progress.
8. A natural philosophy of design at the intersection of neurodiversity, indigenous technologies, ecology and innovation to solve the most pressing problems of our time.
9. Western Science with its evidence based methodologies is a process for discovery and a gift to humanity.
  - There are other gifts. Buried processes for discovery.
  - Both can be used to explore, define, capture, observe, understand and build.
10. We must honour both the neurodivergent and indigenous technologies as potentialities. We must not seek to control, colonise or appropriate them.
11. Indigenous communities bear the brunt of climate change.
12. Neurodivergent people are at high risk of mental illnesses, they have lower life prospects.
13. We kill both groups with our active, self-serving complacency.

## A Story Encapsulated

Kasia Molga

15/08/2020 15:02 - 15:51

**Kasia Molga** is a design fusionist, environmentalist and artist working on the intersection of art, design, technology and science. She explores emerging trends in technologies and how they can influence human perception or/and relation to the natural environment and how they can help to convey the notion of “collaboration with nature”. Her versatile experience of working across design disciplines gave her unique ability to comprehend, communicate and connect complex concepts and ideas. She translates them into tangible, multisensory and visual experiences, immersive environments, installations and hybrid visual/physical interfaces, design fictions or speculative futures narratives.



“How to Make an Ocean” - An inquiry into the possibility of cultivating algae in an artist’s own tears and methods for crying. Photo credits: Kasia Molga, artist’s studio, Margate, 2020.



“How to Make an Ocean” - inquiry into the possibility of cultivating algae in an artist’s own tears and methods for crying. Photo credits: Kasia Molga, artist’s studio, Margate, 2020.

I SPENT MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD SAILING around the world with my Dad on merchant navy vessels. As a child growing up in the middle of the sea I didn’t really have a concept of borders. I also realised how interconnected and interdependent we are with the environment. I never had this idea of a human being on the top of the food chain - more parallel than top down. For me there were no borders between human and non human, there were also no political or national borders.

Prevalent in my work is how to find a connection between our bodies or what constitutes us - humans, the environment and non human makers. Exploration of how I can find these interconnections and relations between me and the air, the soil, the ecosystem of oceans or earthworms and bacterias then gives the start of a story. I use technology as the agent for recording these relations, for example through sensing and interpreting physiological data or real time environmental data. Needless to say that more often than not, this technology is human centred - and so I try to human “un-centre” it and see what happens: what new perspectives can be revealed, new voices can come to the forefront or new unexpected aesthetics can be uncovered.

Nature as a concept is so complex and so big - a hyper object containing gazillions of interconnected elements. We know we are part of it but we live in this world full of layers, layers provided by technology, by culture, by economic and political systems, that keep disconnecting us more and more from the biosphere and from the layers of life. Even the fact that we call ourselves ‘I’, not “We”, even though we are millions of bacterias - that is the core of what I’m trying to do. I ask how can we find this individual, emotional, accessible and not over intellectual, captivating story - a story encapsulated through an interactive artwork or a visual piece or a sculpture or a wearable costume - a story that people can relate to and start thinking about how their own bodies and how their own selves are interdependent on everything around us.

In my opinion a distinction between being a designer and artist is that artists create this story: a story to lure people in, to understand

these aforementioned interdependencies and complexities. And then encourage people to make up their own minds and discover something about themselves that can inspire them to change their outlook or even behaviour; or add something to their life even if it is only about feeling better about themselves, because after all a positive state of mind might result in some amazing positive action.

What is important about encapsulating stories is a creation of these ephemeral, difficult to capture but beautiful moments - such as the moment of falling in love, of being in awe of something, having a sublime experience. The call to action in my work comes from such emotional connections and if I can get people to feel emotionally connected to the subject, then I can open up a portal to see and then understand what is happening underneath the fabric of our daily realities and how it affects the mesh of life.

Obviously I have given a lot of thought about the sustainability of my studio and my media artists peers practices and use and reuse of technology. Often operating systems or software become defunct too quickly, posing a major problem for sustaining and recycling. The solution would be creating our own systems, but for that you need specific knowledge and much more money than we normally are able to receive in the art world.

I try to justify all my usage of technology through the ways I use it to help amplify the voices and presence of other non human makers. In my studio we are always very careful about what we purchase and how we’re going to use it. We also look at, for example, our choice of electricity provider - to make sure that we get green energy for our work. In Margate we have turbines everywhere - so I hope that our energy is pretty clean. I know that not everybody has this choice however.

We are all environmental activists, but the activism doesn’t have to be loud and it doesn’t have to have a huge crowd of people around you, it can be gentle and embracing and even a little shy, whispering the stories in people’s ears gently, motivating us all to look outside our own umwelt.



Oulanka Research Station, Kuusamo, Finland.  
Image by Invisible Flock.



M-Ant-Ra (2019) video still.  
Pollock ants.  
Image by Feral Practice

## Distributed Agency

Feral Practice / Fiona MacDonald

03/09/2020 14:06 - 14:40

**Fiona MacDonald** is an artist and researcher who works with human and nonhuman beings as Feral Practice to create art projects and interdisciplinary events that develop ethical and imaginative connection across species boundaries. Often people set up a divide between human and nonhuman beings, and between different categories of knowledge and understanding. Feral Practice aims to converse across these barriers. Their research draws on artistic, scientific and subjective knowledge practices to explore diverse aesthetics and create suggestive spaces of not knowing nature.



M-Ant-Ra (2019) video still  
Making Lilac Humps.  
Image by Feral Practice



I WAS A STUDIO BASED ARTIST FOR 20 YEARS. My focus was often on human relation to the natural environment but it was quite a representational approach. Then I moved out of London and back to a rural location. And that daily contact with nonhuman nature made me feel like a representational approach couldn't quite engage the ethical and political positions I was interested in. I wanted to get to a place of distributed agency, where everything is made as a co-production. I spent two years working with the woods at the top of the hill, in ways that I didn't fully understand to start with, experimenting, learning, questioning everything.

As artists we are in constant conversation with materials as we make. Even as a painter, there is a listening engagement with the painting, a conversation between you. You don't just impose your will upon it, something happens between you.

I find it generative and important to have projects that are private and slow. I've been working with a particular group of ants in a forest in Kent since 2014. They make large nests, some nearly as tall as me. I return most years for a two-three week residency, and each time focus on a different set of questions and observations. I follow the ants aesthetic preferences in my choice of materials and look at elements that are particularly important to them; for example solar rhythms or temperature, and structure the project around these elements. This rhythm of an intense period of working, looking and thinking with substantial reflection between is very dynamic. And it allows for other things to happen around it, so projects co-exist in different temporalities, and inform each other.

*When thinking with plants, we might do worse than think with our skin, with our edges and surfaces. When humans seek meaning, profundity, the truth, we look into the depths of ourselves, but in plantlife, knowledge presses up against surfaces and tips.*

*A plant's thinking cells are not contained inside one bony box, but distributed right the way through her body, and are most profuse on her edges, where leaf, root or shoot presses up against the world.<sup>1</sup>*

Working collectively and collaboratively and thinking with others in relation to ecologies is explored deeply within the Myco-Lective project<sup>2</sup>. Myco-Lective is an artist development programme, a group of artists coming together and engaging with ecological thinking, climate change, and multispecies futures. We take inspiration from human and non-human models of education, collective action, care, reciprocal networking, and mutual aid, including the mycorrhizal networks of the forest, where plants share nourishment and knowledge via the under-soil web of fungal mycelium. The time we spend together focuses on actively nurturing ongoing collaborative approaches and creating reciprocal support networks. We aim to build resilience, and to nurture a group that can share and work alongside each other in the longer term.

*As we comprehend (or relearn) the complex warp and weft of ecological thinking, and understand landscapes as self-creating masterpieces of which humans can never be masters, can we step back from our urge to manipulate, exploit and control? Will we allow other species the space they need to flourish alongside us on their own terms?<sup>3</sup>*

Everybody has spaces of vulnerability, acknowledging that can be creative. Practices of care that approach an audience with generosity and kindness can also be a way into conversations about care for the beyond human world. I think it is important to say, as clearly as you can, what you think is at stake. Speaking from a position of one's own vulnerability to other people's vulnerability, but also speaking from a position of clarity: 'this has to change'.

1. Feral Practice, Phytocentric 2019 - <https://chisenhale.co.uk/studios/myco-lective-launch-and-reading-list/>

2. Feral Practice and Ama Josephine Budge, Myco-Lective 2019 - <https://chisenhale.co.uk/studios/myco-lective-artist-announcement-and-adapted-programme/>

3. Feral Practice, The Unseeables 2020 - <http://www.feralpractice.com/The-Unseeables>

## Move Beyond Objectification

Sonia E Barrett

14/01/2021 13.32 - 14:12

**Sonia E Barrett** performs Composites of plants, animals, elements and people to create interventions that present their objectification and commodification, she also thinks about how to change perceptions of phenomena in “nature” that are a given. The work seeks to create new questions where there was a kind of certainty that has to do with the hegemony of normative western European values.

Born in the UK of Jamaican and German parentage Sonia E Barrett grew up in Hong Kong, Zimbabwe, Cyprus and the UK. She studied literature at the University of St Andrews Scotland and her MFA at Transart Institute Berlin/New York.

Her work unpacks the boundaries between the Determined and the determining with a focus on race and gender. She makes sculptural works so she can run her hands along the fissures and manifest strategies for multiple compatible existences and mourn.

Her sculptural practice includes place making with a view to assembling communities under the threat of climate to (Re) claim space as well as instituting permanently.



Fanon's bed video still  
Sonia E Barrett  
On paper



Chair No. 33  
 Sonia E Barrett  
 Wingback Chair  
 80 x 60 x 140 cm

MY PRACTICE IS A PERFORMANCE practice, I perform furniture. It's a listening space. I understand furniture to be something that has something to say. With furniture the differentiation between object, plant, animal, element and person collide and elide in very interesting ways. History, society and politics are reflected most in 18th century furniture, which has this history of being cut down in other countries, moved in a circuit of triangular trade, and recreated to make animal forms, as a place of consumption for European wealth, and support for European bodies. I've been sitting with, not on, this type of furniture now for a number of years, and being there to enable the chair or table to articulate itself.

When I discover a piece of furniture that I want to work with and that wants to work with me, then, if I can manage to acquire it - which often I can't because I can't afford it, because ultimately it is very expensive - then I will be with that piece for an amount of time. I will hear into it and feel all the different stories that are in the tree, in the plant when it was just a sapling and listen to the animalisation of it, as there are often carved into it lion paws or leopards paws. So I will listen to all of these different things and think about, ok what does the table want to do now?

The colour of the furniture also echoes the colour of the bodies that were moved in the same spaces and there's an alignment there. In order to upset and trouble these very clear demarcations between people, objects, things, plants, animals, the articulation of the table or chair will often hover between all those categories. These stories, these expressions and these desires are lost if I don't do this work and that's what motivates me. And I feel like once those things are unpicked, then it provides us with a chance to reconsider and to strategize on how to move beyond objectification, per se. So this is why I'm doing what I'm doing, it's performative, but it's also a listening or sensing practice, it's a really emotional and involving space.

Touch is really critical and the reason that I work with furniture is because it has been touched in so many different ways. The first touch; ripping the tree from the soil. Then there's the shipping, the handling touch, the moving and the shipped touch. Then there's the carving touch. And then there's the daily touch of the person that sits there, in that space. That is a lot of contact and sometimes the furniture wants to crouch and withdraw because they don't want any more touch, because it's been a lot.

I started to think about furniture in order to try and get to some of the bigger questions that we face as a society, like how do we not see all the people that are supporting our lifestyles? But we actively don't see them and we just choose to be supported by them. And furniture is an interesting metaphor for that because we have chairs in our daily landscape, and we sit on the chair, but we don't really see the chair. And this touch is very intimate, our most intimate parts are in contact with the chair. But we don't see it. So thinking about this took me to the space of menial labour, the people who are handling the food that goes in our mouth, the sex workers who handle our genitalia, people who clean us or clean our spaces. All of this intimate bodily contact is a kind of labour space. I was interested in finding the points of contact in different types of labour and how they work in our society.

When I'm working with a chair or table it's very physical - my body against it and that requires a level of force to enable it to do something else and sometimes, unfortunately, it's not possible. I'm very careful that everything that is there remains there, so I don't get rid of any parts of it. I rework everything into the work, I don't get rid of anything and I try not to bring anything in. If I'm bringing anything in it's because the piece can't say what it needs to say on its own. I try to let it do its own thing. But there are some secrets that the piece of furniture is not going to share, it won't share and I respect and work with that.

The chair represents the idea of how you can possess something - how you can move from this incredible, magnificent tree growing in Jamaica to a chair standing in great so-and-so hall, in the rolling British countryside. But if you really look at the domination required to do this and take it very seriously, it's gonna teach us something about objectification, about what objectification is and what kind of strategy you can adopt in order to move away from objectification. And if you can do that for a chair, then can you do that for a person, can you do that for a plant, can you do that for an animal? If you can now really see the chair and it makes you sad or it makes you weak, maybe then maybe there's a chance you could get upset about the tree, about the person, about the element. And I'm trying to find that spot and recast those spaces so that they can be seen as what they are.

Often the work is not gendered, it's fluid. Some pieces are overtly female. I like articulating multiple existences and identities and the co articulation of those. So when it comes to these different, multiple identities, not to separate them out and give each one de facto a voice, but see how they speak together. There is a squish, not through choice, but through forced, compression, a smashing together. And the space of smashing together is the furniture.

There's been a shift in my work with *Sky*, I wanted to take up more space and create using the question of how do we assemble now? A Lot of places of assembly are very white spaces. With *Sky* I wanted to take up space and convert it to a space where, if you enter as a black person, there's already a black space there. So I'm thinking in spiritual and ancestral terms, and in terms of communities who have not been given and are not being given a lot of space. I am also thinking in terms of being an artist who has not been given a lot of space to date. I wanted to claim a large amount of space that no one often claims in traditional white cube spaces - the sky space, which was for me, the most powerful space.

*Sky* came about through walking the South Downs four times a day to take my children to school. There are a lot of clouds rolling over and it struck me that these clouds have a kind of freedom, a joy and a movement that reminded me of the best

black spaces I've ever been in. And then I started thinking about who's allowed to be celestial, and what it means to be celestial.

The black cloud is the pregnant cloud, the valuable cloud containing water. At the same time as I was developing the work fires were happening across several continents, in Australia, in Brazil, in Africa and so I started thinking what does it mean to think about the black cloud now, to bring these things together, because they are all together. I ended up hanging the clouds on my own but the idea was to bring a collective group of people together to hang the clouds, to hang the sky, it was supposed to be a collective action. Coming together in hanging this sky, and then being under it together. There is a lot of love that flows when we do each other's hair; this is a moment of love and I wanted to make this massive space where we were collectively doing hair, in the making of the clouds and to assemble this community under the climate threat. But I haven't had the opportunity to do that over the last year. I can do it on my own, but that's not the point. Ideally the work would be creating, claiming and assembling throughout a nice long collective process, that is my vision.

Placemaking in my practice usually involves making a drawing room a burial ground or crime scene to make it an open-ended space for gathering is a newer thing in my practice. It was a response to the floor in the immaculate gallery space at the Villa. The wood was already in the space in the mahogany stained floor and I realised that if there were so many bodies already there I didn't need to bring another one in, I could respond to them instead.

I thought I had really cracked it; a way of making a temporary place that's really inclusive in an environment that is exclusive. So with this work, you could have a very white institution, and then you could assemble people there to make a black sky and that is a way to assemble people that are not usually in the space and have them take up sheltering space without using their own bodies. But now the way we assemble has changed again and so I don't know. But the answer to how can we assemble now? I think it is going to have to be virtual and we don't need to imagine that these digital spaces are neutral, because they're not.



*Sky*, Feb 2020 (Villa Romana)  
Sonia e Barrett  
Hair, wire, thread.  
60 x 700 x 500 cm

Here are some thoughts flowing like lava...

Some day, some time ago...  
Sulphur fell into a pit,

into the earth,  
into our hair and nails,  
into our skin  
and deep into our guts.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur belched in some brackish mud,

helping a bunch of tiny organisms,  
with cousins in the salty seas,  
to make rain fall easier,  
which in turn fed plants, eventually eaten by us.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur tumbled out of a volcano,

was found by a small girl, taken home  
and accidentally dropped on the fire.  
Burning weirdly and with a strange smell  
her alchemist uncle watched smitten and transfixed.

Some day some time ago...  
an industrial revolution unfolded.

So, deep underground (way too hot for clothes),  
naked miners with picks and sledgehammers  
made small enslaved boys  
(who earned nothing but bent over bodies)  
carry yellow rock upwards and outwards in the 'nearest thing to hell'.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur paired up with charcoal and potassium nitrate - an explosive combination.

It wasn't long before everybody wanted a bit of the trio  
to shoot up into the sky  
or at a body or two,  
or simply to place at the base of some impenetrable rock and blow it to smithereens.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur started to attract tourists,

drawing them in like 'moths to a flame'  
to snap photos and marvel loudly at the biblical fug.  
Not really noticing the workers with heavy baskets  
and flimsy hanky-covered mouths, as they trudged past. Eyes streaming.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur got into a bit of a glut.

Wherever coal, oil and petrol was, it seemed Sulphur was too,  
just hanging out for everyone to see,  
as a vast powdery yellow mountain, or a neat pyramid of bricks.  
But what about all the untapped profits? Thought industry anxiously.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur was recognised as something 'other';

Brimstone. And not in a nice affectionate way.  
More as a kind of an insult.  
Full of hell, fury and foreboding  
and a prediction of things to come.

Some day some time ago...  
as a kind of joke, a missile was also christened Brimstone:

An upgrade of the hellfire, this new one was 'fire and forget'.  
Which according to the Prime Minister was 'much better'  
as he addressed all of the MPs in the house of commons,  
as they prepared to cast their votes.

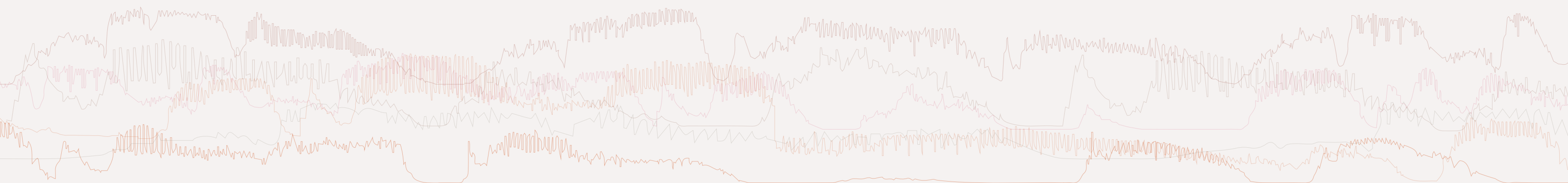
Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur started coming out of mouths...

as a word heads of state and pundits would say  
when throwing insults at each other.  
To sway votes, and cause outrage,  
comparing each other to Beelzebub. Or Satan. Or the Devil.

Some day some time ago...  
Sulphur got everyone hooked

on one compound or another.  
By being a vital nutrient to anything living.  
And being used in just about every industrial process.  
Such as in the making of fertilizers, fireworks, sugar, paints, medicines,  
cosmetics, petroleum products, detergents, dyes, insecticides,  
disinfectants, plastics, steel, storage batteries, shampoos, paper,  
matches...

Sheila Ghelani



## History Informed Futures

Angela Chan / Worm: art + ecology

08/07/2020 15:09 - 15:50

**Angela Chan** is a 'creative climate change communicator', working independently as a curator, researcher and artist. Her research reconfigures power in relation to the inequity of climate change, from colonial histories to minoritised experiences, by self-archiving through participatory conversations, rethinking geographies and speculative fiction. Her current commissions span climate framings, water scarcity and conflict. Angela produces curatorial projects as Worm: art + ecology, collaborating with artists, activists and youth groups. She holds a postgraduate in Climate Change (KCL), and co-founded the London Chinese Science Fiction Group and co-directs the London Science Fiction Research Community.



Climate Knowledges (2020), artist Josèfa Ntjam.  
Image by Lotte Stekelenburg

I BEGAN THE WORM:ART + ECOLOGY website as a place to openly discuss with creative practitioners about why they agree it's important to focus on environmental and climate themes in their work; how that can build a wider picture of the activism involved. I initially started writing and publishing interviews in 2014 to create a space online for these emerging exchanges.

As I learnt different perspectives of climate change, especially through colonial histories and race, these lenses gave me the vocabulary to pinpoint areas that I wished for my work to go. During workshops and talks I was able to engage with people who hadn't come across climate change discussions before, let alone how it is a racialised injustice that's been rooted since colonialism, or even their intersections and parallels within art's own access barriers. It's become very important that communicating these truths is central to my work, which come through in my research, curation and art making.

Thinking about climate change in a very long term, global sense, we need to dissect not only what's going on now, but also its histories. Only then can we afford the privilege to speculate the future. A lot of my work currently thinks a lot about timelines, considering the future is dependent on how much we understand the past. A lot of people choose to ignore or are unaware of how the colonial history of climate change is

sustained by globalised capitalism that continues to profit off the disenfranchised for the advantaged few. It then crucially determines where we can be in the future, and also who's included in this 'we'.

My work thinks deeply about timelines by acknowledging that the hegemonic, singular timeline does not suit an inclusive view of our situation. In my recent *Climate Knowledges* project, 'knowledge' is in the plural form, because it's important to have an understanding of histories, presents and futures. For example, a hegemony of any kind, such as white supremacy or patriarchy, identifies a singular narrative that dangerously erases the possibilities of any other lived experience but its own. But if we allow a plurality of timelines at any moment in time, it becomes more inclusive by acknowledging different realities as well as dreams. This way, different types of knowledge systems emerge as an integrated extension of how I think about multiple timelines in my work. Multiple knowledge systems look at breaking down structures of expertise and value how 'qualifications' can come in many different forms. They can be lived experiences, they can be communally put together.

In terms of exploring new forms of future-focused work, I've recently begun my own artistic practice that researches deeper into how resource scarcity and conflict are publicly framed as part of the wider climate crisis narrative.



*Climate Knowledges* (2020), artist Annie Mackinnon.  
Image by Worm : art + ecology

*Moss Rain Paradox* (2021) is my critique on a recent Environmental Agency supported report that focuses on consumer habits and the growing population as risk factors for the projected UK water scarcity crisis in two decades' time. I'm troubled by the framing that deflects state and corporate responsibility, to shift blame onto the citizen, especially when tightening border control as a way to protect resources is a growing sentiment here. My research methodology further expands on what I'm calling 'living room conversations' across UK regions. I have these with citizens speaking about their own water stories, cultural beliefs, anxieties about water scarcity, migratory contexts of water and borders.

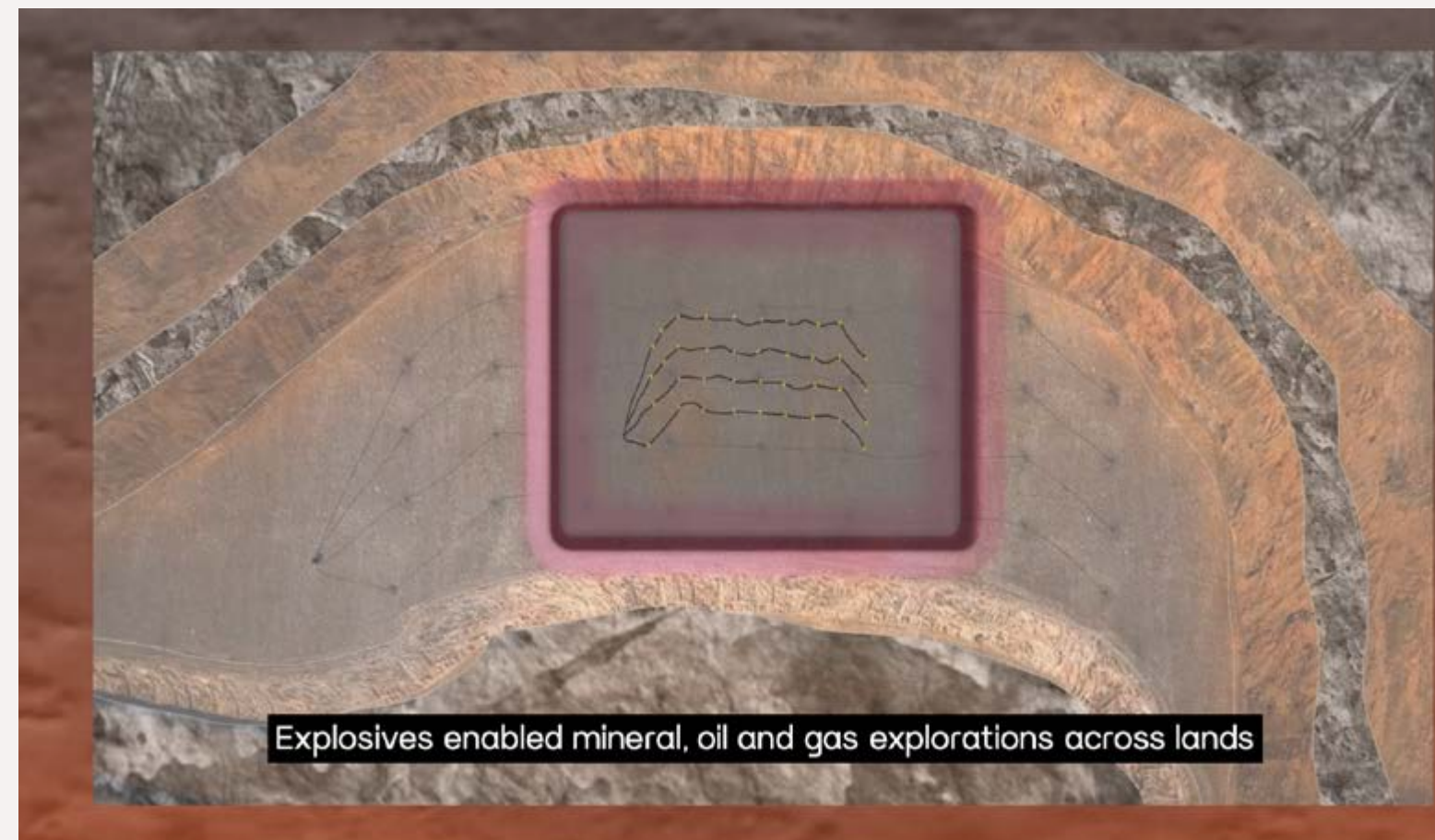
This feeds into another research video commission [*Export\_Explode*> (2021), which resituates the history of the former site of the Pitsea Explosives Factory in the context of global, colonial resource extractions. It's now a nature reserve, but for war and at the end of the British Empire's industrial expansion, it mass produced dynamites that were exported all over the world, irreversibly detonating into lands to mine raw materials. I talk about the legacies of British military and arms in climate histories, and link it to today: the UK government announced its biggest expenditure on the defence sector in 30 years, despite and likely due to the overlapping threats of the global health, climate and social justice crises.

Through my work with youth groups and public programming, I focus on making climate change issues tangible to everyday activism and action, as well as nurturing space for creative speculations. Another area of my research is in sinophone science and speculative fiction about climate change that sits within my wider work with East Asian climate change activism and cultures that I have spent time abroad researching. Authors and artists have long been using science fictional ideas to narrate environmental climate realities and speculative futures, but we're also in a different, more urgent era of that kind of cultural engagement now. Additionally, there's a more global understanding that demands to destabilise the hegemony of who speaks for the climate futures of non anglophone or Western demographics.

That's why I'm interested in decolonial science and speculative fiction from different areas of the world. This literature forefronts the realities of instability brought on by long colonial histories of slavery, extraction and exploitation, which remain as mere speculative fantasies for many problematic stories in science fiction canon. Disrupting and deconstructing such historical canons is necessary for us as artists and thinkers when working on the future of these global issues.

This isn't about making art about global crises, which can be a dangerous distraction. It's about being creative in communicating and acting together to deconstruct the power imbalance that perpetuate these crises.

*Thinking about climate change in a very long term, global sense, we need to dissect not only what's going on now, but also its histories.*



[*Export\_Export*> (2021), video still  
Image by Angela Chan



From the Island, with Rage.

A M Ranawana



Reynisfjara, Iceland.  
Image by Invisible Flock.

Let me show you  
airports underwater  
bulldozed reefs, blasted sands  
and plans to build new atolls  
forcing land  
from an ancient, rising sea\*

\*Kathy Jentil-Kijiner and Aka Niviana (2018) "Rise: From one Island to another" <https://vimeo.com/289482525>

THE WIND HOWLS A PROMISE ACROSS the machair and down to the beach, a narrow strip of land that every month recedes. This, too, shall vanish. Several months prior I have stood on warmer sand, my face against a gentle, tropical breeze which also had a message. This one softer, more plaintive. The island is sinking, sister, the island disappears. I carry the grief of the island within me. I carry the rage of the sinking island within me. My island that was submerged under colonial hands, that was flooded by the blood of a civil war, that now sinks under the weight of environmental damage.

As the climate crisis heightens, so does a sense of ecological grief. As Hannah Malcolm has noted, a collective anxiety spills over into lament, into a hopelessness at the insurmountable nature of the problem.

*“there is a tipping point for knowledge about a dying world, where my grief cannot be undone. I have reached that tipping point and cannot go back, no matter how much I try to guard myself against future exposure to the relentless cycle of bad news. I live alongside my grief.”<sup>1</sup>*

Many who think with and through ecological grief and the anxieties surrounding the climate crisis point to weeping and lament as spaces from which we can build movements, movements that can turn us from thinking only of the I and to consider the collective ‘we’. The Ecuadorian sociologist Maria Andrade Alejandra Vinueza writes,

*“A spirit of lament is where we must begin if we are to step towards healing.”<sup>2</sup>*

It is arguable, though, that much of this lament, this hopelessness is felt at the centre and not as much at the periphery. At the periphery, there is also rage. The same anger I have carried with me from island to island.

1. Malcolm, Hannah (2020). “Climate grief and someone else’s problem” Talk given at St Chad’s, Durham.

2. Vinueza, M (2020) in Words for a Dying World: Stories of grief and courage from the global Church. SCM Press.



But what, I wonder, shall I do with my rage? How do I centre my climate rage in this process of healing? Where does my rage stem from? Rage is a strong theme, not just amongst climate activists and academics from the Global South like myself, but also from communities living in increasingly difficult situations.

*“..bleakness is not something of “the future”. For those of us who are indigenous, working class, black, brown, queer, trans or disabled, the experience of structural violence became part of our birthright. Whenever the tide of ecological violence rises, our communities, especially in the Global South are always first hit. We are the first to face poor air quality, hunger, public health crises, drought, floods and displacement”<sup>3</sup>*

This is where the rage comes from. This rage has fuelled the struggle of communities for decades because the climate crisis is not a new crisis. The struggle for ecological justice is not one that can be separated from the struggle to overturn systems of enslavement, expropriation, colonization and indigenous genocide. Imperial projects that were centred on the expansion of empire also focused attention on the dominion of land such that entire landscapes were subjected to control and exploitation, and colonies were governed in order to maximize extraction of natural resources. As the geographer Keston Perry<sup>4</sup> has highlighted, so much of the Caribbean, such as the Bahamas, Dominica, and Antigua and Barbuda have faced enormous losses from climate-induced natural disasters in recent times. This is a result of colonial systems that prioritised extractive plantation agriculture over protective ecosystems and which disregarded indigenous practices and knowledge about the environment.

3. Open letter from the Wretched of the Earth collective to Extinction Rebellion <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-extinction-rebellion/>

4. Perry, Keston (2021), Realising Climate Reparations: Towards a Global Climate Stabilization Fund and Resilience Fund Programme for Loss and Damage in Marginalised and Former Colonised Societies <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3561121>

This situation continues today, not in explicitly colonial ways, but through deforestation at local government levels, the presence of multinational corporations in Africa and South America, and the constant ‘reclamation’ of land for the purpose of limitless economic growth. Often this growth is at the expense of indigenous and other marginalised communities. As Olufemi Taiwo, amongst others, have also argued, Global North countries are disproportionately responsible for the emissions that caused climate change as well as the underdevelopment that made Africans and other colonized peoples susceptible to climate change, and “this destruction would in and of itself count as [ongoing] colonial violence”<sup>5</sup>.

Hence, fighting climate change is also part and parcel of anti-racist and anti-capital movements. It is an international struggle. The silencing and erasure of indigenous communities, the exploitation and oppression of the vulnerable peoples from the global south at the climate talks must and does fuel the rage that demands an overturning of the ‘death creating’ systems of capital.

Where, then, there is anger, there must be repentance and reparation so that there can be healing. These reparations can only occur in intersectional ways that understand the conjoined nature of the climate struggle to anti-racist and anti-imperial projects. It is important to note that such conjoined, intersectional struggles already exist. If we look to the movements and actions that are taking place around the world over the past several decades, we can see that Indigenous, formerly enslaved, and anti-colonial movements have been resisting and building alternatives to limitless growth for hundreds of years. This is precisely because the climate crisis has long been a reality for many people and ecosystems in the Global South.

5. Taiwo, O (2021) Climate Colonialism and Reparations. <https://forthewild.world/listen/olufemi-o-taiwo-on-climate-colonialism-and-reparations-216>



Hvalfjörðu, Iceland.  
Image by Catherine Baxendale.

*“In the present, it is the destruction caused by cyclones in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, continuing forest fires in the Amazon and Angola. But the centuries-long war economies and forced resource extraction for profit that has led to our current climate crisis were enabled by enslavement and colonization.”<sup>6</sup>*

As such, anti-colonial resistance has long been interwoven with environmental protection. Indigenous, Black, Global South and racialized communities have long fought for land rights against large-scale deforestation and resource overexploitation with ancestral and innovative knowledge and practice. Often, these struggles have quite literally put bodies on the line, such as the case of Berta Cáceres. Cáceres was a Lenca indigenous woman and human rights defender who worked at the front lines defending the territory and the rights of the indigenous Lenca people. Her organisation successfully led a campaign for the defence of the Gualcarque river, which is the site of a proposed dam. Cáceres was assassinated in 2016 by men hired by DESA, the company that was attempting to build the dam.

So this is why we carry rage with us, from island to island. Will you come and join in our rage, come and ‘rend the kinship narrative?’. As Christina Sharpe says, some of us have had no other choice. Come, let us show you how to rage.

6. Malik, L (2019) “We need an anti-colonial, intersectional climate justice movement” <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/we-need-anti-colonial-intersectional-feminist-climate-justice-movement>

**Anupama Ranawana** is a theologian and political economist with over eight years of experience working in academia, international development and think tanks. Her research and teaching expertise and interests are focussed on gender and justice, decolonial thought, diversifying research methodological practice, religious thought in the Global, faith and international development and the intersections between racial and climate justice. She holds advanced degrees in Theology and International Politics.



You and I  
are connected,

Breath  
time  
rings  
roots  
excretions  
breaks  
age  
placedness.  
The ability  
to rustle  
and  
shiver in  
the wind...  
Skin that  
sheds  
limbs that  
bend

branched  
veins  
heart-  
rot.  
Life.  
Manslaughter.  
Heaviness...  
The ability  
to lean  
to fall  
to grow  
to twist  
to adapt  
drink  
consume  
grow calluses  
feed others.

Listen  
list  
sail out to sea  
harbour nests  
and others.  
Living things  
in our hollows  
until we die  
become dead  
diseased  
hacked at  
with axes.  
Burnt  
buried  
pulped  
processed  
become  
something else  
become  
something  
else.



This is a process image of Primo Levi's The Story of Carbon laser etched on graphite.  
Image by invisible Flock

"The death of atoms, unlike ours, is never irrevocable. Here are at work the omnipresent, untiring, and invisible gravediggers of the undergrowth, the micro-organisms of the humus."

Primo Levi, The Story of a Carbon Atom

## A Manifesto for Circular Art

Matterlurgy / Helena Hunter  
and Mark Peter Wright

13/07/2020 11:08 - 11:56

**Matterlurgy** is a collaborative practice between London based artists Helena Hunter and Mark Peter Wright.

Their work addresses critical ecologies embroiled in climate crisis, across disciplines and media, combining the production of artworks with interdisciplinary research, co-constructed events and performance. They have produced projects that address flooding, land degradation, river health, air pollution and climate modelling.

Site-based works have been located in a hydropower station, disused steelworks, a laboratory for ice simulation, an abandoned copper mine and museum collections.



The Faceless Lion.  
Image by Matterlurgy

1. All materials must be found within a 1-mile radius of the exhibition space
2. Where possible seek verbal permission when removing materials from an environment
3. No money should be spent on the fabrication of works
4. All materials should be physically carried to the exhibition space
5. Do not remove materials that are being used as homes (human/nonhuman)
6. All materials must relay a story (past, present, future) of site
7. Art works should be made in situ and not in a sanctioned studio space
8. Materials should be assembled without screws or external fixings
9. Combining materials is encouraged
10. Materials should be returned to where they were found.

This manifesto was developed by Matterlurgy as part of their own rationale for making the artwork *Beneath the Signal and Noise*, first presented at The Silver Building in Silvertown London, UK in the international group exhibition *Silver Sehnsucht*, 30 Sept - 8 Oct 2017, curated by A by P.

The work was a sculptural installation and performance made from salvaged objects in and around Silvertown, London. The installation entwined issues of empire, technological utopianism and spatio-temporal anxiety with Silvertown's own material identity and its complex relationship to time and space within the context of present-day regeneration.



Begin with Noticing.  
Image by Matterlurgy

*Following the flow of matter across time,  
location, politics, culture, and connecting  
these dots.*



#### WE HAVE INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

I (Mark) come from a sound arts background and Helena comes from performance and visual arts. One of the things that brought our work together is the necessity of trying to work with complex contemporary entanglements; between technology, environments, animals, humans. Approaching these relations as an individual mind or body is a challenge, so we came together because it felt like the context demands a collaborative bootstrapping of practice and senses. We felt a need to locate the practice in the world, with other people and to create projects with different sorts of expertise in order to answer some of the questions that we had about the environment, about sustainability, and about our practice as well.

We are always trying to destabilise the question of who or what is the expert? We think about this question when working with traditional experts; scientists or ecologists, and then there's the community or local expert, people on the ground living and imagining with the specific conditions that they're encountering. Also, there are the nonhuman actors we work with on projects who are certainly producing forms of expertise. And then there's the role of the practice as well. So, there's a stratification of expertise, collaboration and knowledge within what we do and the point is to show the plural possibilities of what constitutes the expert within the climate crisis.

During the making of *Geofictions* with MIMA in Teesside for example, we were working on a piece of land that was a disused steelworks, an area of land degradation, but also a really thriving active space of nature as well as leisure, and fishing. The materials that we found had legacies of industrial activity. We gathered organic matter fused with plastics, rubber and tar; artefacts on the shorelines. The idea was to think and write with these materials and to create narratives and speculative fictions about what these things might be. What they evidence - are they future fossils, where might they end up? And to focus on that micro-materiality. It was a way to generate different kinds of stories, different kinds of narratives and fictions around this particular site and environment beyond the negative reportage about Teesside in mainstream media and the complex issues around employment and class that exist there.

The idea of art, what the art object is, is quite difficult for us, because it's so multiple, but that's what we also like about it as well. The art object is made with people a lot of the time, and it's not necessarily something that's always pointable or grabbable. But fabrication and assembly happen, as an iterative process, often with people or just with ourselves, and that fabrication is often animated or not animated. So, we often work with our installations as elements to then interact with, rather than just standalone objects. It is something we can then activate or perform in and around.



The Colonel's Regret.  
Image by Matterlurgy

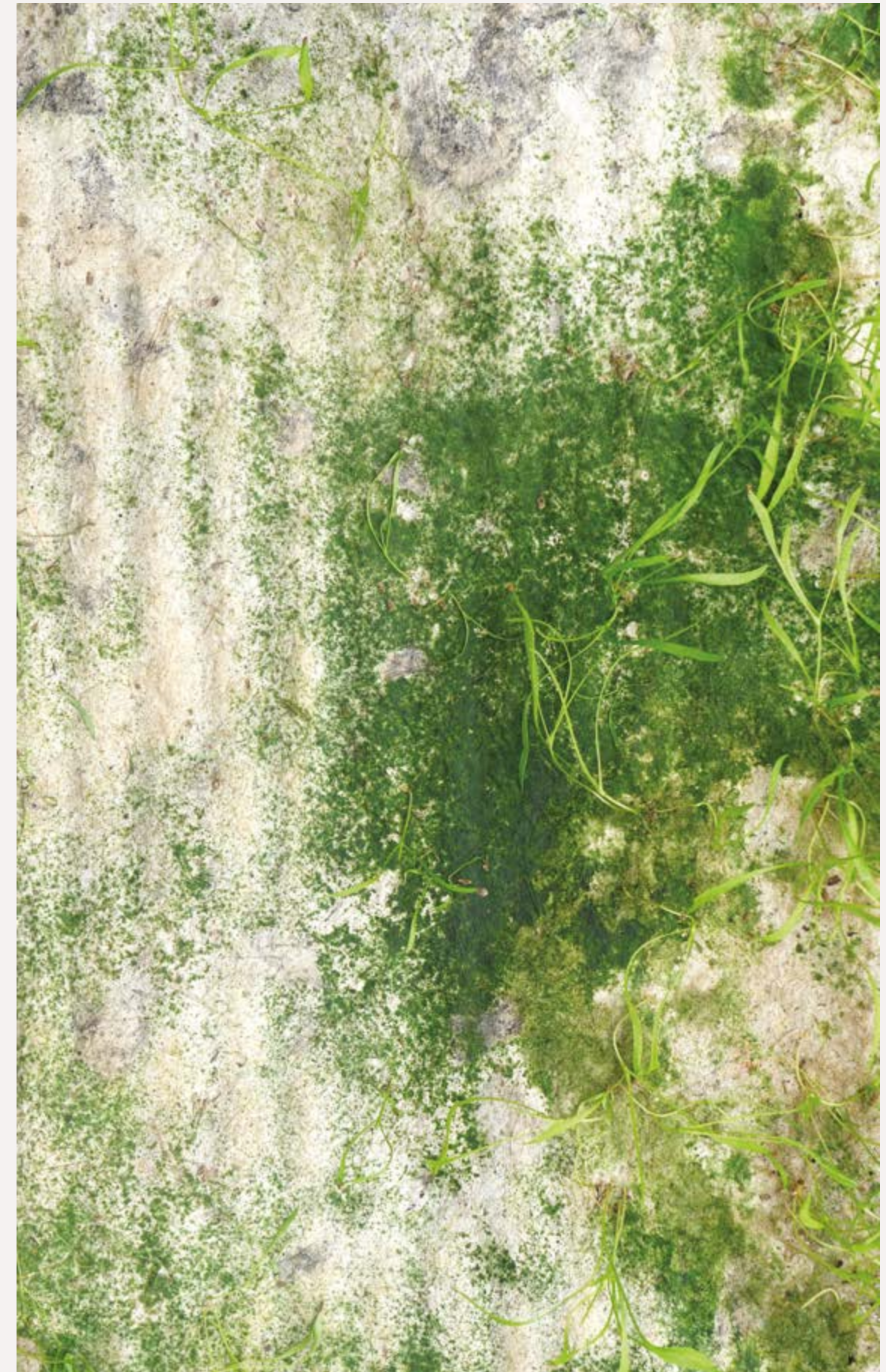


## Playful Non-Human Encounters

Jasmin Märker

28/07/2020 14:33 - 15:15

**Jasmin Märker** is an interdisciplinary artist working at cross-sections of bio-art, sculptural installation and nature pedagogy. Through dissection of critical theory, field-based observations and art-science experimentation she explores themes of interspecies kinship, de-colonisation of land and multi-species ethnography. Her practice involves participative collaborations with both human and non-humans to provide encounters between them and to propose holistic perspectives to sustainability. By employing interdisciplinary art-science processes Jasmin's research encourages intuitive ways of knowing and aims to foster indigenous understandings of nature. The resulting works present as bio-sculptural installations, which often grow, change and evolve during their display time and offer performative experiments to their audiences.



Carrot seedlings and algae grown on giant hogweed paper, research for Invasion Aesthetics.  
Image by Jasmin Märker

## MY ART PRACTICE EXPLORES

sustainability issues through an epistemological lens. I think our problems arise from us doing too many things just because we can and without considering the consequences. Creativity and technology are essentially opposing processes.

Technology is concerned with how to produce a predetermined outcome. The creative process joins various perspectives and subject matter without trying to force an end result and therefore is free to really understand what a problem is actually about. I believe creative intuitive processes are more suited to challenge the behaviour that drives this crisis. Actually David Bohm, one of the most important Western theoretical physicists of the 20th century suggested that thought itself was divisive and inadequate to solve problems of sustainability. Language, an extension of thought, relies on categorising and dividing 'things' to describe them. Only because our language often cannot communicate our perceptions in detail, art and art research are dismissed as subjective and incapable of producing knowledge. Of course, thought is not all bad. Thought has enabled us to solve problems in manageable proportions and hence how to make fire etc., but at some point humankind started dividing things beyond their indivisibility and acted as if it was separate from nature.

I work a lot with living organisms. Originally, I began working with fungi to create a compostable sculpting material. But I was soon mesmerised by the growing processes and the obsession with culturing all sorts of organisms including bacteria, yeasts and slime-moulds began. Therewith also came an interest in biopolitics and environmental philosophy. Quite often my creative process starts with an interesting piece of critical theory. It is often a text which contextualises human problems through the lens of non-human ecology or vice versa.

Then I begin with more practical explorations and visual information gathering that get the creative process going, such as urban walks, nature explorations and intuitive art-science experimentation. For example my work *My Immortals* (2018) challenged anthropocentrism in our spiritual beliefs. It was exploring the role of our body's microbial residents in making our perceived 'self'. I cultured over 200 petri dishes of microbes collected from my body and environment. The images were digitally arranged to make up a pattern reminiscent of a Thangka painting with a Mandala as centerpiece.

My recent project *Slime Dynamics*, part of the Northern Ireland Science Festival 2020,

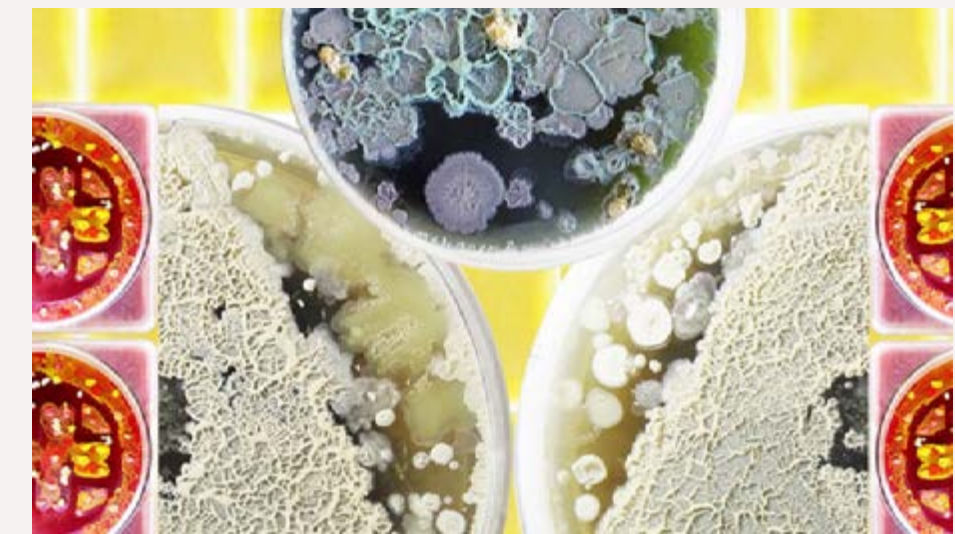
was conceived as a research project to explore common dynamics of biological communities and human territories and to experiment with more engaging exhibition formats. I have a desire to 'make' in my practice, but at the same time it is very process driven. There is nothing more exciting than entering my studio and checking my experiments to see how they evolved. This is the element, which I believe has the greatest capacity to fascinate people for non-human worlds; but these processes remain hidden to the one time gallery visitor. I wanted to see if I could somehow combine both, a display of art works and the experimental aspect. The project included a series of workshops during which participants were invited to make psychogeographical reflections of Belfast and translate them into art-science experiments with slime-moulds and wheatgrass roots. By creating these playful non-human encounters I aim to foster a curiosity for what nature is, rather than for what it can do for us.

My current research was inspired by a book called *The Ethics and Rhetorics of Invasion Ecology* (Stanescu and Cummings, 2017). The resulting project, named *Invasion Aesthetics*, examines how aesthetic concepts, nationalist ideologies and economic ideologies render life forms desirable or pestilent and therefore affect our decisions to kill

or nurture them. I used nature forays to investigate the different habitats humans construct e.g. gardens, agricultural land and 'the wild'. In each of those territories we deem species disruptive or invasive and consequently remove them. Foreign non-humans, such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, are often used as scapegoats and are made responsible for biodiversity loss. The comparisons we can then make with the scapegoating of human migrants is palpable.

Colonial narratives are everywhere, present in everything - from how we perceive species, from how we keep our gardens, to how we know. I think wild food forays and western agricultural processes serve as great analogies to opposing epistemic processes. There is a constant demand for technological rational explanations. It is like weeding a field. Things can only be this or that. Rarely we allow multiple understandings to co-exist. I have ADHD so my research approach often doesn't fit into these structures. My mind often gets bombarded by thousands of ideas and I like to investigate across disciplines and consider many different angles rather than following a linear trajectory. I therefore consider my nature forays not only as a source of visual inspiration, but also as a wild way of exploring matter as I come across it. I played around with this idea in my recent publication on the project.

*MyImmortals-2018.*  
Image by Jasmin Märker



hazel  
doormouse \*

Throughout the project research I collected, pressed and collaged plant material. But rather than just sticking the plants to paper I am trying to create dynamic works that are reflective of the complex interspecies relationships that make habitats and also consider the human conceptions that govern these. I am creating my own paper from plant matter to represent the decaying vegetation through which new life emerges. I am also allowing the paper to be colonised by relevant microorganisms, fed on by insects and altered by seeds sprouting from it in order to reflect on the organisms we consider disruptive to these territories. In a way I see these works as landscape painting but also as artistic alternatives to ecological sampling. While traditional methods use quadrants to count the number of species present in an area, my 'collages' aim to produce holistic understandings of habitats and the humans and nonhumans that make them. I am, though, very much at the beginning of this research and I think it will take me a long time in order to produce really successful works.

For a long time I had this naive idea that my whole practice came from my reading of critical theory. But recently I reflected and realised that so much of it, if not everything is influenced by personal history. I have lived in divided places my whole life. I was born in communist Germany, went to school in Bosnia and then I came here, to Belfast. I grew up with a disabled sister and in a working class household. Concepts of (dis)privilege and invisible barriers and borders have featured strongly in my upbringing. I think, to challenge these systems has always been the main motivation in my work.





Image by Sadé Mica

## A Piece of the World

Sadè Mica

**03/03/2021 16:05 - 16:51**

**Sadè Mica's** current practice is rooted in exploring the self. The self in relation to gender and performance; how the world around them affects their relationship to their queerness and the body they inhabit. How movement is policed by environment and us and how fraught the control we have over our perception is when thrust outside of solitary environments.

They explore how their body is both freed and restricted, liberating themselves and their limbs in the British countryside, posturing against vast landscapes foreign to them, capturing the stillness of their form and thoughtful movements as well as those more chaotic and less considered.

They use textiles to eschew the expectation of stealth bestowed upon trans people and our bodies and embrace unmasking the performative nature of gender, placing the onus upon those who aren't aware of the sacrifices made to find peace within one's body in the way that we are.



IT TEKS TIME  
Image by Sadé Mica



Still from *At The End of the Day*  
 (Jus Pull Up in that Last Lay-by) (2019)  
 Image by Sadé Mica

I JUST STARTED GOING ON DRIVES through the countryside. The first place I went to was Edale in the Peak District. I don't know how I found it, but I just took a drive out there and decided to document myself outdoors. It was about documenting me in that space, because it was somewhere that I'd never been; a scenery that I knew existed, but I'd never actually existed in. So I started doing these kind of poses, it just felt like the most artistic thing I could do with my body whilst recording.

A lot of my best films come from happenstance. I just like to document these beautiful places, but it's a lot about the experience as well. A lot of the time, it's about me trying not to scare the locals because I'm not from those places and the majority of the people there are white, and I'm there, a black stranger traipsing through rivers,

with chairs and stuff like that. I'm aware, it's very strange to people. So I think a lot of my relationship to these spaces is just about being as covert as possible while knowing I am being very loud in my actions.

I have a fondness now for certain places and I want to return to them. At first it was about, seeing as much as possible and going to as many places as possible, but I didn't anticipate falling in love and really wanting to see all of what one place has to offer.

Film captured when I am coming back through the water or stuff like that, is when you really see how I actually interact with the landscape, the material of me trying to get back and not fall over feels like a real expression of self. Every move that I make in those landscapes is because I know

that if I don't put all of my weight on this left foot, my right foot's gonna buckle. Because my body is big and I don't walk around these places every day.

The actual final image or film of my work looks completely solitary, like I'm on my own in a waterfall. But in reality, with a new work, for example, it was New Year's Day, I thought it'd be quiet because I don't know about New Year's Day walks because we don't do that where I'm from. And it was packed with 40 or 50 people and their kids. But I had a deadline and the light was going, so fuck it. I was there with my mum so she could hold my things, I had my coat strewn on some rocks and the tripod in the river, just crossing my fingers that it wouldn't fall over and get wet. But in the film you would never know and I like having a little backstory. It's just as important because that is the inperson performance, when people are standing around watching it is a performance.

Once I was parked up filming on a dirt road in between two farms. This man drove up and looked like he wanted to get down the lane, so I packed up the tripod and moved the car. He was gesturing, so I put my window down and he was like was that a gun? dead aggressive. I realised he meant the tripod, maybe it looked like a rifle, I said no it's a tripod. I'm an artist. In that moment, anything could have happened. But why would I be walking around with a rifle? I was reminded that sometimes in those spaces, I am not the person that they expect to see. It keeps me on my toes and now when I see a place I really want to go to I try to research if it is public or private land, am I allowed to go there? I think of the bigger existential questions this brings up, like how can we own a piece of the world, why are there lines marking where we can and can't go?

We are natural creatures but we are also divorced from the land. It's not a return to nature if you've never actually been there, I'd never been in these places before, it was all new. So I feel this sense of freedom but it's also restrictive. I don't know if it's a futile thing I have been searching for; to feel connection, at peace with the world and intune with the natural landscape, but I haven't felt that rush yet, I'm still waiting for it. But that is just what I've been told I should feel or should want to feel. Actually what I am feeling is exhausted, it's cold out there, what I am feeling is awe from the beauty of everything, how big it is, as well as how different it is to my everyday life where I am usually just surrounded by urban landscapes; houses, concrete and tarmac. I have come to accept what I do get out of it which is peace, a childlike sense of exploration and feeling more confident than I should, perhaps trusting the land too much. I know now how to confidently step on certain rocks, without feeling like my ankles are gonna break. I'm growing each time I go back but it isn't like a transferable skill, It doesn't necessarily make me more peaceful in everyday life.

I'm really nostalgic about places, it's nice to miss a place, especially if you've purposely forged your connection with it as a place that I sought out, found, came back to and now we have a friendship so to speak.

I was driving around and exploring new places at around the same time I was getting counselling and it felt like the two things were really related, two brand new things that became massive parts of my weeks. When I started going to counselling sessions I felt at peace, I felt understood, I felt welcomed and open and vulnerable, similar feelings to those I felt in the landscape. So I filmed a counselling session outdoors. It felt apt to film outside and document this beautiful place that I felt comfortable in. I made a choice to be near the water, I wanted to get the sound of the water in the recording. The sessions are what helped me to be confident enough to sit out there, talk out loud, to be real and honest about how I was feeling at the time.



Image by Sadé Mica





Heol-Yr-Orsedd by Tata Steel Works  
Port Talbot, Wales  
PM2.5 20 - 30 micrograms per cubic metre  
Air of the Anthropocene  
By Robin Price and Francis Pope.



Llewellyn Street by Motorway  
Port Talbot, Wales  
PM2.5 10 - 20 micrograms per cubic metre  
Air of the Anthropocene  
By Robin Price and Francis Pope.



Prince Street air quality monitoring site  
Port Talbot, Wales  
PM2.5 30 - 40 micrograms per cubic metre  
Air of the Anthropocene  
By Robin Price and Francis Pope.

## Excavate The Hidden Things

Angela Davies

16/09/2020 15:14 - 16:04

**Angela Davies** is an interdisciplinary artist working across the intersections of art, science, technology and nature to create sculpture, installation and performative works. Davies is driven by an inquiry into phenomena of the natural world and perceptual experiences of it. Her work engages with contemporary themes within the context of site, space and process and is often informed by scientific exchange and collaboration. Her artworks aim to encourage poetic engagements between people and place. This interaction extends to new reflections upon the way the environment is experienced and imagined.



Silent Spring.  
Image by Andrew Gale.

I AM INTERESTED IN THE relationship between people and place, our position in nature and how human activity has shaped the natural world. Growing up in Wales I felt really connected to the land. I recall attaching mythologies and stories around places as most children do, I never grew out of it. In my work these stories now become connected fabrics between things.

The reason why I'm doing what I do is because I'm driven by the disconnect between humans and nature and I care. I find ways to excavate the hidden things in an attempt to make sense of it. I want to encourage a sense of feeling close to the source. If we can see it and understand it we might be able to change it.

Often my work operates on a sensorial level, close to nature. I'm interested in finding ways to capture a process in nature to help us to relate our human experience to it. The outcome of these interests are often embodied in sculpture, installation and performance.

While on a residency in Norway in 2017 I had been reflecting on the local impact from the global situation. The audio-visual piece *Impermafrost*<sup>1</sup> evolved from reflections on the

collapse of fragile systems happening around the residency's location and the interconnected nature of global scale events to local climate concerns.

These connections between global and local events can often be found close to home. In Wales the seaside village of Fairbourne is positioned between the sea and Snowdonia National Park. The local council has confirmed that it cannot defend the village indefinitely from the rising sea levels meaning the 850 or so residents will need to be relocated. This community could be the first UK climate refugees in as little as 25 years.

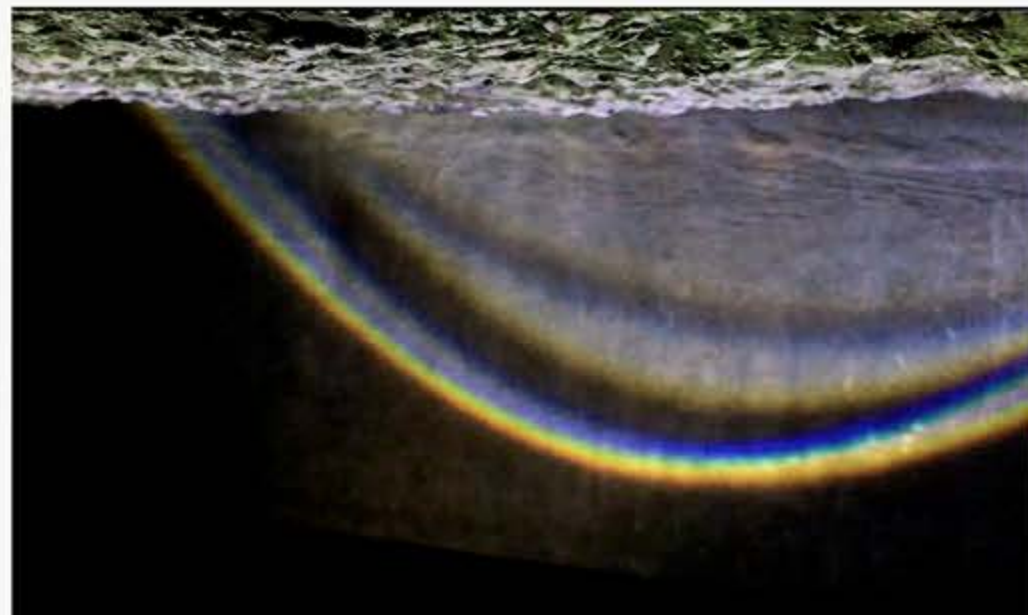
I found NASA footage animating the shrinking sea ice in the Arctic Ocean. What really resonated with me was how the contracting ice simulated the notion of breathing. I wanted to create an experience that embodied these sentiments.

I gathered scientific data of Arctic sea ice flow to explore how to visualise the impact of climate change from a global situation and bring it to a domestic scale. The piece reflects upon life cycles and the shifting states.

Starting points for making work might include collecting material from the woods, such as sycamore seeds to observe how these winged fruits fall, or tracing X-ray footage of a bird or visualising skeletal movements, and researching online – ranging from casting methods to looking at environmental data sets from weather systems to sea ice flow.

In the studio this often develops into action research. These are some examples of things I have been doing recently:

- ...sculpting porcelain bones
- glaze firings
- painting gold leaf
- fusing glass
- soldering LEDs
- making circuits
- programming electronics
- making digital drawings for fabricating parts out of metal
- field recordings in the landscape
- crushing glass
- documenting ice as it melts
- assessing footage
- editing footage
- fusing sound with video
- casting with salt,
- moulding my father's vinyl collection...



Spyglass Tryptic.  
Image by Angela Davies

Relationship to place and landscapes plays a significant role within my work. I am from Wrexham in North Wales, a border town. I have always been interested in human intervention in the landscape. This is in part informed by my love of the trace, of time. For me, walking within the landscape affords new perspectives on place and over time I have become very interested in the boundary. There is the Welsh border connection to boundaries but not only this cultural boundary, I am interested in human-nature connectedness and the relationship between internal and external landscapes.

One of the main challenges within my practice is a sense of loss and uncertainty around the fragility and vulnerability of the ecosystems of our planet. I feel that the increasing scale and urgency of the climate crisis has motivated new methods of engagement with artists and scientists, I suppose we are navigating new ways to illuminate the issues and these types of partnerships can really play a part in this. I see the role of art as one that can connect on an emotional level and I see the arts as being part of an ecosystem of how we can think about survival.

In a new body of work *In Light of your Shadows*. I have been reflecting on ideas of trauma and loss, both on a personal and an environmental level. This has made me want to reach out to wild

landscapes, both internal and external, especially when living in such conditions of restricted mobility. Questions of where we position ourselves in heightened states of urgency and the sensitivities required to navigate within such fragile systems seem to resonate within this new body of work.

With so much cultural content shifting to digital platforms as a means to share in experiences, I am concerned about the impact upon platforms for more direct experiences of art. The physicality of people and place allows us to connect on an emotional and tactile level that currently feels under threat. It is so important that we allow for material encounters that break the boundary of the screen.

We are all carrying our own anxieties in this current climate, cultivating creativity during such challenging times is so important. In Wales we have the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act<sup>2</sup> as government policy, it strives to nurture and connect public activity for the benefit and wellbeing of the people in Wales. Positive movements are already under way, such as Natural Resources Wales working in partnership with Arts Council Wales. With these kinds of cross sector collaborations, we can hope that enabling people to access the arts in the natural environment may encourage new connections with place.

1. <https://www.angladaviesartist.co.uk/impermafrost>

2. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>



Angela Davies, Impermafrost.  
Image by Pål Hoff.

## Scratched By The Land

Tanoa Sasraku

13/01/2021 15:04 - 15:39

Born in 1995, **Tanoa Sasraku** examines the intersections of her identity as a bi-racial, gay woman raised in Plymouth (UK). Her practice shifts between filmmaking, drawing and flag-making, juxtaposing and performing British, Black, Ghanaian and queer cultural histories in her navigation of self.

Sasraku's appliquéd, newsprint flags are inspired by the visual and material structure of the Fante Asafo war flags of coastal Ghana, which the artist's paternal ancestors fabricated in resistance to British colonial rule. Her own flags map personal stories of a life lived in modern Britain, as classroom materials are fused together to create cryptic, ceremonial objects.

In her practice as a filmmaker, Sasraku engages in queer, black retellings of traditional British folklore, as well as producing more diaristic journeys through her past, via the medium of analogue film. The presence of her figure, set against the sublime, British landscape throws into question ideas of "deep" England and what it means to claim ownership over the rural.



O' Pierrot (2019). 8mm film still.



I WORK ALOT WITH CHEAP, BOUGHT materials engaging in craft and sculpture, paper banners and flags. At the time of making *Whop, Cawbaby* I was thinking about stories told on West African pictorial flags that my ancestors on my father's side used to make, to document and tell stories and warn others of British colonial rule and mechanisation on the coast of Ghana. I decided it was a good platform to talk about my experience growing up in the southwest of England. As a teenager, I spent a lot of time in the landscape of Dartmoor. The flags I made use symbols to tell stories of processes such as swaling the land (a form of controlled burning), which is something that farmers on Dartmoor do to control the spread of Gorse Bush - which is a really aggressive weed that was brought onto the landscape in the 1800s and colonises the land - I was really interested in that phrasing around this plant. I presented the cycles of burning these weeds, the pushing back of the weeds and the introduction of caterpillars, which feed on the charred weeds and turn into Golden Fritillary Butterflies. I thought it would be interesting to take these banners, which had symbols of these processes, out onto the actual moorland and see how these classroom materials; newsprint, ink and charcoal, on a handmade wooden mast, would interact with the quite harsh climate on the moors. They were in fact super robust and even when lashed with wind and rain they would swell with water and then contract and take on new properties - scratched by the land. I would return them to the studio and inspect them. So that was the start of my interest in working with the landscape.

The landscape of Dartmoor has been the backdrop to so many of my formative experiences, it is the first place young people go to escape to and be away from their parents, it is full of so many memories that make sense to harvest for my practice. I feel very attracted to the colour palette and the textures of the landscape as a wetland, it is a very sandy colour, that looks super painterly when translated through analogue film.

In my work I lean towards working with the idea of the time loop and being stuck in a time warp. In terms of narrative structure, I really enjoy a spot the difference exercise and seeing a scene again and again each time with subtle changes, and that links to my interest in dream sequences and conveying bad dreams. There's just something really unsettling about the idea of the time warp. With my second film, *O'Pierrot* I was trying to highlight moments in history and black history, particularly black theatrical history that have been somewhat written out. In terms of trying to understand my own identity, looking back within my family, through time, photos, storytelling, anecdotes, as a way to understand my position. It's something that's very important to me, looking through time backwards and forwards. And the time loop idea, I suppose I felt something akin to being in that as a teenager in Plymouth, thinking, when is this going to change? When am I going to find something that reflects how I feel? So it comes out in my work now as an articulation of things I experienced very strongly growing up; this feeling of being in a bit of a loop.

Swaling Gorse - *Whop, Cawbaby* (2018).  
Production shot by Lewis Brander.



I developed uses of tartan fabric during the making of *O'Pierrot*. I'm interested in tartan, partially because my girlfriend is Scottish, and is very passionate about her Scottish heritage. I've also always been interested in weaving. My Dad was a couture designer, and was very passionate about using Kente cloth from Ghana and mud cloth from different parts of West Africa. So textiles and their visual power is something that I've been raised understanding. Tartan seems to be the only British tribal textile, where stories are told through the cloth in a more abstract way. Communities would use local pigments found in plants and soils to dye the yarn.

Landscape and textiles come together in *O'Pierrot* as a way to talk about the difficulties of feeling patriotic to this country. I was able to use this work as an arena to explore areas of anger and pain. The protagonist - whom I play - is taking on the classic character of Pierrot. I wanted her to be so consumed with a desire to be British that her tartan smock consumes her face and hair. And then in the character of the Harlequin, who is the villain, he is both beautiful and grotesque, an embodiment of cruelty, clad in red, white and blue, as an embodiment of Britain. Harlequin encourages Pierrot to strive for her potential to be British, but then reprimands her when she gets too close. I think that speaks to the Black British experience quite strongly, at least in my experience, as a mixed race person; being encouraged to strive for your potential in being British, and your sort of whiteness, but never quite being allowed to reap any of the benefits of that.

Growing up the image of the movement for climate justice was something that I just didn't think that I fit into. And even though there have been conversations about inclusivity in movements such as Extinction Rebellion, I still felt like it is something that I just couldn't really connect with and I've always found that frustrating. There doesn't seem to be a mainstream climate justice movement that I can see myself reflected in.

I'm currently writing with my creative partner, Kirsty Black, two short films, dealing much more directly with the mixed race experience growing up on the coast and linking to folklore and fantasy. The work will be a retelling of the Orcadian folklore of the Selkie, a story of a shapeshifting seal that takes human form and assimilates with the human populace and can only return back into the sea once she slips her seal skin on. But the classic folklore is that the seal skin is stolen by a jealous fisherman, and she's then caught between land and sea and her relationship to the sea starts to evolve and change. I think it's a pertinent story to talk about escape, desire and black people's relationship to the British coast, particularly how growing up isolated and particularly by the seaside, can impact one's mental health.



Whop, Cawbaby (2018).  
8mm film still

## The Squirrel and the Mongoose

By Zakiya Mckenzie

Illustrated by Amy Balderston



A little grey squirrel sat back on its hind legs and surveyed the land at dawn. There were tall English oaks with trusty acorns, deep green firs and a little stream with cool, clear water that was sweet and satisfying before a morning's forage. Little Squirrel was happy. This time of daybreak, after the barn owl packed in his nightly hoot, before the chattering magpies started to spew the truths of a new day, was special to Little Squirrel. She arose early in the morning to hold this stretch of time and marvel in it until she had to let it go. It is not that she wanted to give it away, but the town would soon wake up too. Loud sounds and putrid smells would intensify and take over. It was only her haven before the city started its engine.



At the same moment, a little mongoose was looking at her home at dusk on another small island across the sea. There were tall mango trees that dropped juicy, overripe fruit when the season was right, thick grass that was perfect for hunting and a little spring with cool, fresh water that was sweet and satisfying after an evening's forage. Little Mongoose was happy. This time of day's-end, before the patoo commenced its nightly hoot and after the jankro cleared the disgrace of the day, was always special to Little Mongoose. She could hold her contentment in whole, like a belly full of her favourite treats. She didn't think about letting it go, even when the town grew closer.



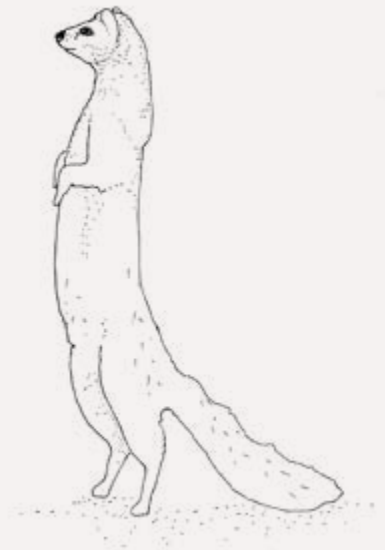
So the squirrel worried for what it didn't know while the mongoose feasted on what it did. Little Squirrel thought it inevitable that the city would spread and tighten its grip on her home, but Little Mongoose knew that she was a wild animal and could take what pleased her. For mongoose was originally from a place with vast land to roam but taken to the tropics to prey on rats in sugarcane fields, they quickly multiplied and became too much of a predator themselves. Little Mongoose knew that she was not welcomed in many places, but this did not matter because she never stopped to ask.

"They may call me invasive now but wasn't it they who brought me to the new city, brought the new city to me?", thought the mongoose.  
 "Was I to eat only rat and leave rare bird? Was I to hunt bush snake but leave bush crab? Was I to scamper the countryside for control of vermin but

not follow my nose and the scent of the sea, to find gold at the end of the rainbow in delicious sea turtle eggs? Was this place to take me over, or was I to take over it? I am what happens when the city does not think about this."

Little Mongoose laughed. What else was she to do? She would always make the best of what was to be found. Furthermore, people sometimes kept chicken or grew crops, and they never seemed to be able to get rid of their waste. All of this was inviting to a little mongoose.

Time passed and Little Squirrel soon learned the lesson of the mongoose; the closer people came, the less afraid she grew. Eventually, she found them useful and even became fond of the family she spent the winter months with, nestled in their attic roof.



We Are Not Passive.

Ilan Kelman

*In the end, vulnerability is about the long-term choices by those with power and resources who force large swathes of the population to live with few options or resources.*

CLIMATE CHANGE IS THREATENING THE UK, challenging life on this small island - or so we are often told. Does this narrative stand up to science? As always, the clear answer is 'yes and no'. Whether the balance tilts towards 'yes' or 'no' ultimately comes from what we want for the UK and how we are willing to act to achieve the goal.

Despite human-caused climate change now having major effects on our environment, we can and should be doing plenty to stop it and to prepare for its impacts. And so much is under our control. After all, climate change by definition is simply changes to average weather over decades.<sup>1</sup> And the people of the UK can deal with adverse weather.

It might not always be easy, especially as climate change pushes heat-humidity combinations<sup>2</sup> into realms where the air does not cool down enough at night for people to survive. In a country not used to air conditioning, offices and schools are also expected to become dangerously sauna-like. Without wholesale renovations, a substantive increase in energy costs for indoor temperature control, and perhaps spending a lot of time indoors with the air conditioning, heat-related deaths could skyrocket.

Other climate change impacts around the UK<sup>3</sup> are up to us to adjust to.<sup>4</sup> Storms and droughts are becoming more intense while the seas rise and become more acidic, plus new plants and animals migrate in as the environment changes. These differences become problematic only if we let them by doing nothing.

We are not passive, merely waiting for climate change to affect us. Given how bad heat and humidity will become, action to stop climate change is imperative, mainly through reducing fossil fuel consumption and increasing greenhouse gas uptake, including through supporting appropriate ecosystems and construction materials, while ensuring that these actions do not cause other problems such as using non-native species or making buildings uncomfortable for users. Meanwhile, dealing with the changing weather - and the knock-on impacts on food, freshwater, and daily living - means implementing established practices for reducing weather-related disasters under any circumstances, including fresh and saltwater flooding, drought, and storms.

1. <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

2. <https://www.lancetcountdown.org/>

3. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/effects-of-climate-change>

4. <https://www.ukcip.org.uk/>



Kanasuo, Utajärvi, Finland.  
Image by Klāvs Kurpnieks

*Among over 200 main countries and territories, the UK ranks 22nd in population and 81st in area, leaving little prospect for claiming smallness.*

Weather and climate by themselves do not stop us from being prepared to avoid harm and damage. If we choose not to consider weather or climate, then we are, in effect, permitting disasters to happen. Considering that weather happens and changes all the time, it should not be that hard to deal with it changing, except that many people do not have the resources or opportunities to do so.

Poverty means that they might be forced to live in a floodplain without flood-resistance measures, so flood disasters recur. They might not be able to afford air conditioning, fans, or heating, so tens of thousands of people die each year<sup>5</sup> in the UK from this 'fuel poverty'.<sup>6</sup> Insurance is typically out of the question, because it costs.

This vulnerability exists irrespective of climate change and people are vulnerable to any hazards, whether affected by climate change or not. The real question is why we permit this vulnerability to accrue and continue, rather than helping people have the choices they need to help themselves. This vulnerability creation is a long-term political process<sup>7</sup> dictating why so many families never have enough cash on hand to purchase insurance, why many energy suppliers are private companies without a mandate to assist people in need, and why people renting often find

that their landlords do not undertake retrofits to address floods, drought leading to ground movement, or hot and cold temperatures.

In the end, vulnerability is about the long-term choices by those with power and resources who force large swathes of the population to live with few options or resources. It is about why and how we maintain this state despite knowing the consequences and how we should change to improve our future. This approach to understanding the fundamental causes of vulnerabilities and how to solve them differs from the perspective of climate change scientists who view vulnerability as a snapshot describing the current state of the potential for damage or harm. Too frequently, climate change work views vulnerability as a static description of what is, rather than why this is and where we should go.

We lose so much understanding without considering this vulnerability process. It further influences the picture of the UK under climate change, such as trying to explain that the country is a small island and is vulnerable because of it. Yet among the over 200 main countries and territories,<sup>8</sup> the UK ranks 22nd in population and 81st in area, leaving little prospect for claiming smallness.

5. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/excesswintermortalityinenglandandwales/previousReleases>

6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>

7. <https://practicalactionpublishing.com/book/527/development-in-disaster-prone-places>

8. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>



Kanasuo, Utajärvi, Finland.  
Image by Catherine Baxendale

Historically, the UK was also a world powerhouse, imposing its imperial oppression<sup>9</sup> across all continents, ripping resources and wealth from colonised populations, and exploiting people and the environment to maintain its status through violence, conflict, and war. These are some main ingredients in creating vulnerability. This small island at the edge of Europe ensured that the sun never set on the vulnerability created by the British Empire.

Despite this legacy, the UK today remains large and connected. Islandness remains in the mind, but it is hardly a reality with the Channel Tunnel, cheap flights to dozens of countries, fast internet, and richly diverse multicultural residents maintaining strong connections around the globe. This does not stop the UK creating its own vulnerabilities, including to climate change, by maintaining poverty and oppression, while failing to build infrastructure which can withstand the expected impacts of climate change.

Yet climate change and vulnerabilities to it interact with other challenges, so they cannot be viewed in isolation. They should be tackled together, with climate change being placed within wider contexts, to ensure its inclusion without it dominating. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020<sup>10</sup> demonstrates the importance of not becoming distracted by focusing on climate change alone,

but instead working across all hazards and risks simultaneously.<sup>11</sup> Helping people out of fuel poverty is essential, as long as it is connected to tackling racism, sexism, obesity, crime, and other day-to-day problems.

Action to stop climate change and its damaging impacts has galvanised so many people. We should retain this momentum, channelling it into constructive, collaborative endeavours to assist us all, from expanding public transportation (with air conditioning) to identifying the most marginalised people and resolving their needs.

As we seek an improved post-pandemic society,<sup>12</sup> dealing with climate change is an essential component, but not the only one. If believing in the island brings people together while maintaining a positive position for the UK in the world, then fair enough. Adopting an island culture, though, is not necessary for doing better. Instead, it requires a reorientation of values to understand why too many people are too vulnerable to too many societal ills simultaneously and, most importantly, how we could work together to reduce those vulnerabilities.

9. <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/307/307759/inglorious-empire/9780141987149.html>

10. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1469-8676.12890>

11. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/DPM-02-2017-0043/full/html>

12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2RoPig2F-Q>

**Ilan Kelman** is Professor of Disasters and Health at University College London (UK) and a Professor II at the University of Agder, Kristiansand (Norway).



First There is a Mountain by Katie Paterson.  
Image by Rosie Lonsdale.



## Re-thinking Planetary Practices

Arts Catalyst / Laura Clarke

08/06/2020 13:46 - 14:28

**ARTS CATALYST WAS FOUNDED IN 1994** as a charity and non profit arts organisation that commissions artist projects and research inquiries at the intersections of art, science and technology.

Through a critical approach, the intention of Arts Catalyst was always to ground conversations in the role of science in society. Why should or how could people be interested in scientific research and how do new developments, narratives and scientific 'facts' affect peoples' lives? How do they affect policies and shape infrastructures?

Over the last three years our work has focused on the notion of planetary health, which partly emerged through the Test Sites programme and our relationship with Megan Clinch. Test Sites is Arts Catalyst's series of inquiries into matters of concern connected with environmental change – such as flooding, pollution, and species loss – and their impact on local culture and the health and wellbeing of our ecosystems and ourselves.

Questions of planetary health became closely intertwined with the exploration of specific sites or contexts, where site-responsiveness and its relationship to communities can refer to geographic communities, communities of interest and non-human communities, and how the specific conditions experienced by those communities link to broader planetary issues which interconnect in ways that aren't necessarily immediately obvious. Connections can emerge between the locally-felt issue that a community might be experiencing and an environmental disaster on the other side of the world.



1. <https://www.artscatalyst.org/test-sites>

2. Dr Megan Clinch is a social anthropologist and lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research explores how different forms of investigation, experimentality, evidence, and evaluation are understood (or not) and managed in the development of public health interventions.

3. <https://www.artscatalyst.org/content/extractable-matters>



London Mining Network Tour, 2019.  
Images by Alex Coley, courtesy Arts Catalyst.

Whilst Test Sites explored the structural issues and forms of inequality underlying environmental issues along the River Calder in West Yorkshire, our broader inquiry into planetary health became the basis for the Extractable Matters programme, which provides a polyfunctional context for inquiring into the molecular violence that mining companies are inflicting on land, minerals, cultures and communities. Thinking about the broader relationships of mining to infrastructure through the lens of ‘cheap nature’ – the extraction of rare earth minerals and metals – as something that is incredibly invisible to us in the UK, but is present in things that we use every day, begins to make visible the complex web of connections between the local and the planetary.

Chilean artist Ignacio Acosta’s project Tales from the Crust looked at mining activities in Chile and in Sámi areas in northern Sweden. Through an in-depth visual and spatial exploration, the project articulated a series of overlapping case studies of extractive violence, including Parque Andino Juncal, an Andean conservation park currently fighting against mining exploration; and Caimanes, an agricultural town heavily affected by water contamination and scarcity by Latin America’s largest toxic dam El Mauro from Los Pelambres copper mine. In looking at the companies perpetuating massive resource extraction in other countries, direct connections emerge with the UK, where the headquarters of four of the biggest mining companies on the London Stock Exchange are all within a short walk of Buckingham Palace.

During Assembly: Extractable Matters The London Mining Network led a tour of these four companies; Rio Tinto, Glencore, Anglo

America and BHP, presenting examples of specific environmental disasters directly related to the activities of those mining companies while standing on the steps of their offices, which was a powerful way of grounding what may seem like issues that happen “elsewhere” within the real-time economic infrastructure of the UK.

Building on the Extractable Matters programme, in April 2020 we announced the research strands that will guide our work over the next few years. Through transdisciplinary collective inquiries, we want to engage with existing complexities and entanglements that shape social and environmental (in)justices on both a local and planetary scale. The process of developing the programme in relation to these strands will be ongoing and cumulative, allowing for a continual process of learning, evaluating and reflecting through each of the projects that we grow with different collaborators.

Informing this process will be our ‘collective inquiry’ or ‘co-inquiry’ approach, developed through the Test Sites programme, to working with artists, scientists, communities, interest groups and activists, where all forms of knowledge – artistic, scientific, ‘expert’ and situated/local – are valued equally, and through dialogue between these different perspectives and positions, the shared ‘matter of concern’ to be investigated, explored or inquired into is established. The collective inquiry is centred around building alliances to develop a curatorial approach that works towards collective and transformative practices, which we hope may be able to create the conditions for experimenting with building new or better infrastructures for the future.

*Connections can emerge between the locally-felt issue that a community might be experiencing and an environmental disaster on the other side of the world.*

4. Jason W. Moore and Raj Patel use the term ‘cheap nature’ in reference to extractive capitalism in ‘A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet’

5. <https://www.artscatalyst.org/ignacio-acosta-tales-crust>

6. <https://www.artscatalyst.org/assembly-extractable-matters>

7. <https://londonminingnetwork.org/>

Julie's Bicycle /  
Lucy Latham

**On 11th June 2020, Julie's Bicycle wrote to Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to call for urgent public investment to ensure a green, rapid and just transition for the cultural sector. In a statement of shared intent from UK culture, our letter has now been endorsed by over 800 leading cultural figures and organisations across the sector.**

**This advocacy - by and for the sector - has never been so critical. We have an increasingly narrowing window of time to lock in the changes necessary to limit the worst impacts of the climate and ecological crisis. Ahead of hosting COP26 in November 2021, this must be recognised by future generations as the landmark year for ambitious and transformative climate action. The shock waves of the global pandemic will be felt across the world for years to come and the creative and cultural community has been severely hit. The pandemic, as well as movements like Black Lives Matter, have further exposed structural racism and injustice in workplaces and across society. As the profound impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic become clearer, fault lines deepen and the need for a radically different society becomes all the more apparent.**

**The opportunity we find ourselves in is bigger than recovery. Re-thinking cultural policy so that it is both ecologically regenerative and aligned to carbon net-zero is critical. We need cultural policy which positions the sector as an agent of change, driving the green economy and a socially-just society.**

**Over the next year, Julie's Bicycle will be exploring the key trends and policy frameworks, mapping cultural practice and identifying the opportunities for building and scaling action. Through a series of sector engagements and consultation, we will develop a policy roadmap for the UK cultural sector: a menu of policy prescriptions to take to the national government, and present during COP26.**

ACKROYD & HARVEY - Heather Ackroyd & Dan Harvey / Adam Chodroz / Adam Corner / Adam Wickens / Adrian Searle / A  
Cody-Richardson / ALBA MUSIC / Aleksa Evele / Alex Brown / ALEX RAZAK GARDEN DESIGN - Alexandra Razak / Alex Ta  
Spalding / Alice Wadsworth / Alison Criddle / Alison Neighbour / ALLY CAPELLINO - Alison Lloyd / Ama Joseph  
Andrea Carter / Andrew Land / Andy Swann / Angela luzi / Angela Wachner / Anna Ferriol / Anna James / Anne Bent  
Shayler / APPLES AND SNAKES - Lisa Mead / ARCHITECTS DECLARE / ARCOLA THEATRE - Jack Gamble / ART GENE - Anna L  
ARTS & HEALTH SOUTH WEST - Alexandra Coulter / ARTS & HERITAGE - Stephanie Allen / ARTS 4 DEMENTIA - Veronica F  
Sarah Teale / ARTS PORTFOLIO - Robert Sanderson / ARTSADMIN - Róise Goan / ARTSWORK LTD - Megan Pottle / ARVON  
TECHNICIANS - Mark White / ASSOCIATION OF FESTIVAL ORGANISERS - Steve Heap / ASSOCIATION OF FESTIVAL ORGANISERS  
CENTRE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS (University of Sussex) - Laura McDermott / AUDIOFLY, FLYING CIRCUS EVENTS - Anthon  
CONTEMPORARY ART - Sarah Munro / BANIJAY GROUP - Natasha Wells / Barbara Echlin / Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE  
Alexander Levene / BEGGARS GROUP - Simon Wheeler / Begum Calimli / BELGRADE THEATRE TRUST COVENTRY - Joanna Rei  
Betti Stephens / BFI - Lily van den Broecke / BICEP - Matthew McBriar / Bity Booker / BLACK ENVIRONMENT NETWORK  
- Cassie Vaughan / BRAINCHILD - Marina Blake / Brian Eno / Briony Latter / BRISTOL OLD VIC - Chloé Naldrett / B  
Brown / BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS / WORLDWIDE FM - Gilles Peterson / BROWNSWOOD RECORDINGS / WORLDWIDE FM - Simon G  
Dominic McGonigal / CAA - Daniel Rais / CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL - Rebecca Stewart / CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION - Matt B  
/ CARIBOU - Dan Snaith / Carla Washbourne / CARNIVAL NETWORK SOUTH - Carla Hayes / Carol Hodge / Carole Dangois  
CONTEMPORARY ART - Zoe Dunbar / CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION (University of the Arts London) - Professor Dily  
Ang / CHIMES AGENCY - Ania Kasperek / Chris Fraser / Chris Greenwood / Christine Magill / Christopher Hounsom /  
Stanley / Clare Wilkinson / CLIMATE MUSEUM UK - Victoria Burns / Clive Raymond / CLORE LEADERSHIP - Jonathan Ma  
- Matt Black / Colin Kirkpatrick / Colin Wallace / COME PLAY WITH ME CIC - Tony Ereira / COMPASS MUSIC - Gérald  
Jessica Prendergrast / CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY - Fabienne Nicholas / CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ART NETWORK (CVAN) -  
Creative Kernow) - Fiona Wotton / CREATIVE FOLKESTON / CREATIVE LAND TRUST - Gordon Seabright / CREATIVE STIRLI  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE BCC - Claire Starmer / CULTURE DECLARES EMERGENCY / CULTURE FIRST - Heidi Bellamy / CULTURE  
- Victoria Hume / CULTURE24 - Jane Finnis / CURATING TOMORROW - Henry McGhie / CURIOUS SEED - Leigh Robieson-Cl  
Damian Hebron / Dan de la Motte / DANCE UMBRELLA - Bethan Peters / DANGERS-TALKING - Pip Duke / Daniel Bailey /  
Debbie Bell / Deborah A Fexis / Deirdre Munro / DEPOT - Natasha Padbury / DEXYS - Sean Read / DEXYS AND DEXYS M  
DIRTY HIT - Jamie Osborne / DOC SOCIETY - Jessica Edwards / Dominic Tickell / DOMINO RECORDING CO. - Harry Marti  
ECONOMICS ACTION LAB - Kate Raworth / Dr Evelyn O'Malley / Dr Matt Brennan / Dr Michael Leach / Dr Paul Behrens  
Foxcroft / EARTHWORKS GLOBAL - John Martin / EARTHWORKSGLOBAL - Jo Garland / EAT YOUR OWN EARS - Tom Baker / EC  
EDGELARKS - Hannah Martin / Eduardo Castillo / Edward Dovry / EEL PIE RECORDS - Kevin Jones / Eleanor Rhode / E  
EMI RECORDS & PMR - Ben Parmer & Daniel Parmer / Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch / Emily Barker / Emily Bowen / Emil  
FITNESS - Jay Brightwater / ENDLESS RIVER - Alan Creedon / ENGAGE, the National Association for Gallery Educati  
ETHICALLY WOVEN - Noshua Watson / EURIELLE RECORDS - Eurielle / EVE - Ben Quarrell / EVERYDAY RECORDS - Helen V  
Richardson / FASHION REVOLUTION - Orsola de Castro / FASHION REVOLUTION - Sarah Ditty / Fay Milton / FEATURED A  
NO AR COQUETEL MOLOTOV / FESTIVAL OF THRIFT - Stella Hall / FESTIVAL REPUBLIC - Melvin Benn / FILM LONDON / FIL  
Fiona Tyrrell / Flora Menzies / FLOW ASSOCIATES - Bridget McKenzie / FOCAL POINT GALLERY - Katharine Stout / FO  
Franziska Rosenzweig / Fred Howarth / FREE WORD - Roma Backhouse / FRITILLARIA ICONES - Laurence Hill / FROZEN  
Gemma Swallow / Genevieve Marciniak / George Herbert / Georgia Attlesey / Georgia Monk / GIANT ARTIST MANAGEMEN  
GLAM.RED - Geoff Langston / GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL - Molly Whawell / GLOBAL ARTIST MOVEMENT - Dean Samuel / GOOD  
Graeme Burton / GRAND JUNCTION AT ST MARY MAGDALENE'S - Cas Bradbeer / GREATER FISHPONDS ENERGY GROUP - James P  
Hanna Kahlert / Hannah Miller / Hannah Peel / Hannah Scott / HAPPY MUSEUM PROJECT - Hilary Jennings / Hardish V  
FESTIVAL - Andy Fryers / HB INCORPORATED / Heather Coustick / Heather Fenoughty / Heather Gilberthorpe Pell / H  
HERITAGE DECLARES / Hil Clayton / Hilary Gresty / HILLS FOLK MUSIC - Aaron Austin-Glen / HINTERLANDS FILM FESTI  
Fletcher / HOME Manchester - Dave Moutrey / HONNO PRESS - C A Oakley / HORNIMAN MUSEUM & GARDENS - Nick Merrima  
(Institute of Conservation) - Sara Crofts / IF NOT NOW DIGITAL LTD - Chris Bettles / IGNITE! - Rick Hall / Ilja  
CO. - Cole Stacey / INHERITAGE - Bill Bevan / Iñigo Mikeleiz-Berrade / INTERNATIONAL TALENT BOOKING - Oliver Br  
CO. - Catherine Baxendale / Jack Thompson / Jacob Heringman / JAGGERS ARTS MARKETING - Gill Jagers / James Car  
Pollard / Janey Moran / JASMIN VARDIMON COMPANY - Jasmin Vardimon / Jason White / JAYDA G / Jean-Philippe Randi  
Jess Bernberg / Jessica Andrews / Jo Chate / JO WINSON CONSERVATION - Jo Lynn / Joan Saul / Joanna Mackie / Joa  
Flynn / JOINER OF DOTS / THE RAPIDS - Jack Horner / Jon Hopkins / Jon Moore / Jonathan Badyal / Jonathan Hill /  
Nesbitt / Julia Royle / Julian Rushton / Julie Allan / Julie Rafalski / Juliet Richardson / Juliet Richardson /  
Roberts / JUST SO FESTIVAL - Olivia Kehoe / JUSTICE IN MOTION - Anja Meinhardt / Karen Lawrence / Karen Simmond  
Katie Haines / Katie Hodgkin / Katy Bell / KELLY HILL PHOTOGRAPHY - Kelly Hill / Kelly Lee Owens / KEY PRODUCTI  
KILTER THEATRE SOUTHWEST - Caroline Garland / KINGS PLACE - Robert Read / KINOKULTURE CINEMA - Ruth Carter / Ki  
Booth / LANCASHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST - Daveen Wallis / Laura Bradshaw / Laura Caradonna / Laura Coleman / Laura Ho  
- Kully Thiarai / Leon Wright / LES AUGURES - Laurence Perrillat / Lesley Bleakley / LETTERS TO THE EARTH - Kay  
LIGHTHOUSE - Alli Beddoes / LIVE ART DEVELOPMENT AGENCY - Lois Keidan / LIVERPOOL EVERYMAN AND PLAYHOUSE - Robe  
AGAIN - Ruth Davey / Lorna Hempstead AM / LOUDHAILER PRESS - Lewis Jamieson / Louisa Buck / Louise Dwyer / Loui  
Linton / Madani Younis / Maddy Read Clarke / Maeve Campbell / MAJOR LABIA - Siobhán Cannon-Brownie / MANCHESTE  
Charles Beauchamp / Marcus Lim / Margaret Wiltshire / Maria Evans / Maria Perevedentseva / Marie Hamilton / Mar  
Schulze Berndt / MCM - Steve Heap / MEADOW ARTS - Clare Purcell / Megan Shore / Megan Stillwell / MELITA ARMITA  
Hillier / METTA THEATRE - William Reynolds / Mhairi Killin / Mia Dunning / MICHAEL DAVIES - Green & Seen / Mich  
Munt / MITAL-U - Bruno W / MIXTAPE MUSIC - Ollie Cruse / MOBO ORGANISATION - Kanya King / MODERN ART OXFORD - A  
Lloyd / MR SCRUFF / MUSEUM OF ORDINARY PEOPLE - Jolie Booth / MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION - Sharon Heal / MUSEUMS OF M  
MUSICA NORDICA CIC - Simon Munro / Mykaell S Riley / NAME PR - Sam Shemtob / Natalia Damigou Papoti / Natalie J  
THEATRE OF GB - Paul Roseby OBE / Nayan Stalder / NEIGHBOURHOOD RECORDS / Neil Tennant / NEW ADVENTURES - Louis  
Jordan / Nick Nuttgens / Nicola Pilkington / Nicole Davis / Nigel Hinds OBE / NIGHTINGALE VALLEY COMMUNITY CHOI  
TUNE LTD - Peter Quicke / NO BRA / NO STONE THEATRE - Nicholas Pitt / NOISE OF ART - Ben Osborne / NORFOLK & NO  
Rawling / NUKUYOGA - Nuku Wondrausch / NUS-UK - Zamzam Ibrahim / OCTAGON THEATRE BOLTON - Catt Belcher / OCTOPU  
/ OPEN CINEMA - Christoph Warrack / OPEN SOURCE ARTS - Myra Rowland / OPEN TO CREATE... Ltd - Anna B Sexton / O  
Cayenna ponchione-Bailey / ORIEL DAVIES - Steffan Jones-Hughes / OUR LIVING SOIL - Clive Adams / PADDINGTON DEV  
PARRABOLA - Philip Parr / PATRICIAN PRESS - Patricia Borlenghi / Paul Ducker / Paul Elam / Paul Read / Paule C  
HISTORY MUSEUM - Katy Ashton / Perdi Higgs / Pete Fillery / Peter Clayton / PETER MUMFORD DESIGNS / Peter Speig  
- Bea Udale-Smith / PITCHBLACK PLAYBACK - Ben Gomori / PLASTIC OCEANS UK - Kavina Upadhyay / Polly Bentham / Po  
SERVICES ASSOCIATION / Professor Emeritus Edward Cowie / Professor Tim Jackson / QUARANTINE / QUAYS CULTURE - G  
RAGGED EDGE - Venetia Thorneycroft / rb&hARTS / REAL IDEAS ORGANISATION - Lindsey Hall / REALLY BIG PANTS THEAT  
- Sam Oliveira / Regina Acosta / Richard Pilbrow / RIPPLA - Ricky Barber / RIPPLA - Wayne Yardley / RIPPLE ARTS  
Macrorie / Roger Watts / ROGUE DESIGNS - Charlotte Holmes / ROKBOX - Verity Brown / Ronan Boyle / Ros Rigby / R  
TRADE RECORDS - Tom Travis / ROUTE CANAL ARTS - Simon Tipping / Rowena Price / Roxanne Carney / ROYAL EXCHANGE

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to urge you to make the cultural recovery a just and green cultural recovery.

Along with many others in the UK the creative and cultural community has been badly hit; lives have been lost, buildings are dark, festivals are empty fields, tours are stationary, and thousands of people and business suppliers dependent on culture have shut up shop. Coronavirus has exposed deep-seated social and economic inequalities.

What we decide now will create the sustainable foundations for the future; we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a resilient recovery plan that is fair and tackles the climate and ecological crisis with urgency. We cannot let this opportunity pass us by.

Before the pandemic the creative and cultural sector was contributing £111.7 billion to the UK economy - greater than the automotive, aerospace, life sciences, oil and gas industries combined - employing over two million people and growing at 5 times the rate of the economy as a whole. The sector is of national and international significance but not just to the economy; aside from soft power and tourism, we generate civic and community cohesion and well-being. Our track record in climate

action is also of international significance. Thousands of artists and organisations from across the creative spectrum have been championing climate action for many years, not least because Arts Council England has undertaken the largest cultural programme of environmental literacy anywhere in the world, and is the first national funding body to make environmental requirements a condition of funding. Having already shown our commitment to environmental action we want the cultural recovery to be a fair, just and green recovery.

The cultural community is ready to galvanise its power to drive change.

We urge government to commit to a rapid, just and green cultural recovery combining targeted public investment, clear policy signals, and implementation of Climate Change Act obligations extended to the Cultural Renewal strategy. We urge that action to protect nature and biodiversity is given the attention it so urgently deserves. And we urge that the singular opportunity to tackle systemic barriers to empowerment that many black and minority people experience, not least across the culture and environment sectors, are prioritised. This last point goes to the heart of a just transition.

The UK's leadership matters. Whilst the UN COP 26 climate negotiations have been rescheduled for November 2021, we still have to fulfil our 2020 commitments and show increased ambition. Every month we delay action is a lost opportunity to establish the frameworks and investment commitments which demonstrate our dedication. The cultural community will do whatever we can; we hope you use these months well, and help us to help you lead.

We ask that:

1/ The Cultural Renewal Task Force prioritise a rapid, just and green recovery, with designated representation on every sub-group. A just transition must be woven into all themes to ensure that those who have been left out, and the freelance creative workforce are taken fully into account.

2/ The recommendation from the Committee on Climate Change that legally binding "net-zero policy [is] embedded across all levels and departments of Government" is adopted by DCMS and the UK put in place policies to meet its current fourth and fifth carbon budgets which we are currently not on track to meet.

3/ Public cultural compliancy and funding requirements are aligned to net zero requirements and promote biodiversity, and

that larger organisations adopt explicit science-based net zero pathways.

4/ Any national Green Recovery plan is sector-specific to include the creative and cultural sector, with a focus on inclusion, place-making and communities, including strong incentives for space for nature.

5/ Specific R&D funds are designated for the creative and cultural community to benefit from interdisciplinary knowledge and partnerships which result in fit-for-purpose and future-proofed cultural services and products.

6/ A cross-cutting government Task force on Green Creative Skills and Curriculum Reform is created, with representation from Department for Education, Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs encompassing environmental and cultural expertise to prepare the future cultural workforce adequately.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Wadsworth CBE, Chairman

Alison Tickell, Chief Executive

Dated: 9th June, 2020

## Consistently Political

GroundWork Gallery / Veronica Sekules

20/08/2020 15:04 - 15:39

**GroundWork Gallery** is dedicated to the environment. It shows the work of contemporary artists who care about how we see the world. Exhibitions and creative programmes explore how art can enable us to respond to the changing environment and imagine how we can shape its future.

Veronica Sekules is Director of Groundwork Gallery in King's Lynn, Norfolk, UK, previously she worked at Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, where she was first a curator, then Head of Education and Research and Deputy Director. She is currently a judge for the International Children in Museums Award and is an established writer, art historian, educationalist and consultant.

GROUNDWORK GALLERY IS BASED IN THE centre of Kings Lynn, an eastern England town, situated on The Wash.

*The Wash is a large bay and estuary on the East coast, linking the counties of Norfolk and Lincolnshire, and opening into the North Sea. One of the broadest estuaries in the United Kingdom, it is fed by the rivers Witham, Welland, Nene and Great Ouse.*

This location is one of the reasons for GroundWork's core purpose being environmental. It sits in a floodplain on two rivers, including the Great Ouse, a big trading river.

*We aim to connect art and environment in the belief that art can help us to see the environment in new ways, understanding that art and artists have*

*the power and potential to inspire us. We have a duty as the viewing public, to respond to art with thoughtfulness and action.<sup>1</sup>*

Audiences have a duty to respond intelligently to artists who present sincere provocations; every work of art brings something new into the world that wasn't there before. We have a responsibility not just to consume art but to talk about it, deal with its consequences and act upon it. I think that art by itself doesn't change anything, but it can stimulate change if it's responded to appropriately. Audiences have not taken this onboard nearly enough. I joke that I do more teaching in the gallery than I ever did as head of education, because I am constantly talking to people, everyone who comes in, and I've learnt a lot.

1. Extract from Groundwork Gallery's Manifesto - [www.groundworkgallery.com](http://www.groundworkgallery.com)



Great Ouse.  
Image by GroundWork Gallery

In the 4 years we have been open, we have shown and worked with over 50 artists. Sometimes a particular body of work stimulates specially important interest or action. Cornelia Hesse-Honegger is an artist we have been working with recently on the Bugs: Beauty and Danger Exhibition<sup>2</sup>. Since the catastrophe of the nuclear power accident at Chernobyl in 1986 Cornelia has collected, studied and painted morphologically disturbed insects, mostly true bugs. Her research concluded that all nuclear installations, including normal working power plants, such as Sellafield in the UK, cause deformities on true bugs; Heteroptera. She campaigns as well as making work, but she says that even now, scientists don't listen to her. They're not listening, they didn't want to because, she says, that scientists based in universities are not free agents. They are paid for by

vested interests, so they don't want to rise up and declare what's happening through nuclear fallout. But, she says, the art world is listening. We are indeed not only listening, but taking this awareness of her work to a wider public, among other things through our collaboration with Buglife, the invertebrate conservation charity.

I think it's time that the art world became consistently political. There's been a lot of picking up and putting down of issues and, well, I think there needs to be more coordination and more working together - not working in competition in silos, that is not healthy.

2. <https://www.groundworkgallery.com/exhibition/current-exhibition-bugs-beauty-danger/>

# Go Into That Friction

Ian Solomon-Kawall /  
May Project Gardens

17/7/2020 14:08 - 14:56

**May Project Gardens** is situated in the suburbs of Morden in South London. The Project was founded in 2006 with the aim of bringing communities closer together through ecological and ethical activities.

Hip-Hop Gardens is an award-winning, innovative education model that educates and empowers young people to be healthy, entrepreneurial and grow their communities. A programme that engages urban youth with nature through popular Hip Hop culture, which transcends language and cultural backgrounds. Combined, the two worlds give young people a strong and holistic foundation for financial security, self-discipline, independence, balance, good health, social integration, and fulfillment.

Ian Solomon-Kawall, the Co-founder and Director of May Project Gardens, is also known as the artist KMT and has over 20 years of leading positive social change through Hip Hop music and a non-exhaustive passion for the environment and conservation.



WHEN YOU TRY AND LOOK AT environmentalism, it is full of dark imagery; farmers, winter's night, milking the cows, it's very gloomy, isolated and lonely, OR it tends to be very white, and very light. 'We are the World and we're going to save the planet.' but it doesn't deal with the systemic oppression that people face as a result of consumerism, capitalism as well. Hip Hop Garden was created to specifically address this, particularly for young people, because they are the future.

I started to understand principles and ethics within permaculture. And one of the principles which exists in nature is the notion of edges and value in the marginal. And it connected for me. There are so many people on the edges of society, yet they create so much magic and so much innovation, they usurp, they start and that's what Hip Hop does. So it made sense for me to go into that friction, into that tension and work with it.

It's been a challenging time, with COVID. It's brought the importance of the work we're doing and not just us, but sustainability from a grassroots perspective, to the fore, and raised multiple issues around food, food sovereignty, immunity, healthy diets and community.

\*netwinged beetle



Hip Hop Garden.  
Images by Rii Schroer



Hip Hop Garden.  
Image by May Project Gardens

It's interesting you mentioned wellbeing because there doesn't seem to be a global, a localised or even governmental response to wellbeing in light of this lockdown. Everyone's just had to go back to normal and people are supposed to navigate their own ways through it.

I find the fear and the doom, end of the world extinction rhetoric interesting, the earth would be fine without us - the planet will be completely fine without our presence - we are the problem.

Having a conversation is great in terms of maybe raising awareness, but I'm not interested in just awareness alone. I'm interested in action. I'm interested in accountability. There's got to be accountability for systematic change. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense.



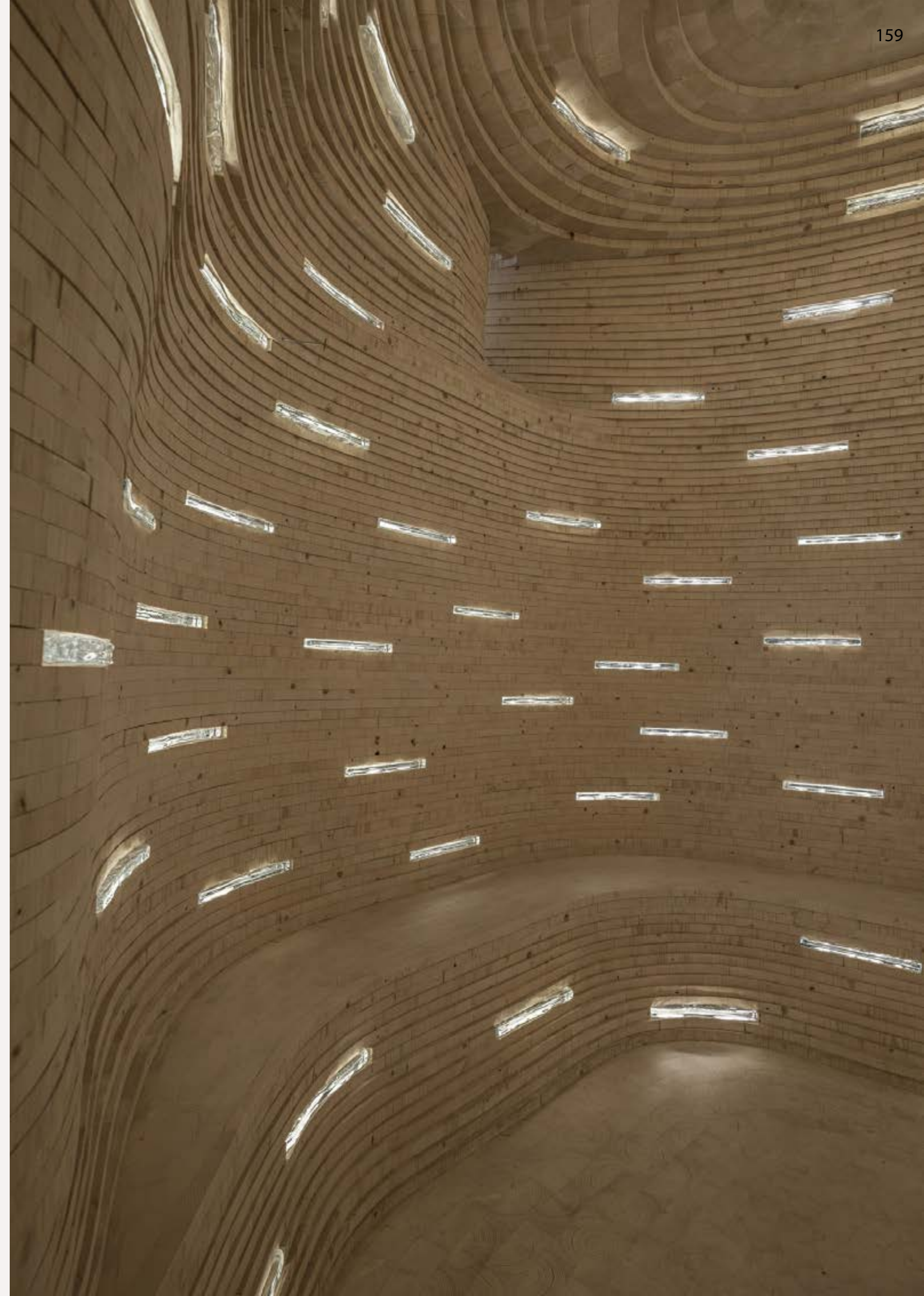
## Future Library

Katie Paterson

**Katie Paterson** is widely regarded as one of the leading artists of her generation. Collaborating with scientists and researchers across the world, Paterson's projects consider our place on Earth in the context of geological time and change. Her artworks make use of sophisticated technologies and specialist expertise to stage intimate, poetic and philosophical engagements between people and their natural environment. Combining a Romantic sensibility with a research-based approach, conceptual rigour and coolly minimalist presentation, her work collapses the distance between the viewer and the most distant edges of time and the cosmos.

A forest has been planted in Norway, which will supply paper for a special anthology of books to be printed in 100 years time. Between now and then, one writer every year will contribute a text, with the writings held in trust, unread and unpublished, until the year 2114. The manuscripts will be presented in a specially designed room in the new public library, Oslo. Writers to date include Margaret Atwood (2014), David Mitchell (2015), Sjón (2016), Elif Shafak (2017), Han Kang (2018), Karl Ove Knausgård (2019), and Ocean Vuong (2020).

Silent Room, by Atelier Oslo, Lund Hagem and Katie Paterson. Deichmanske bibliotek, Oslo.  
Image by Vegard Kleven, 2020

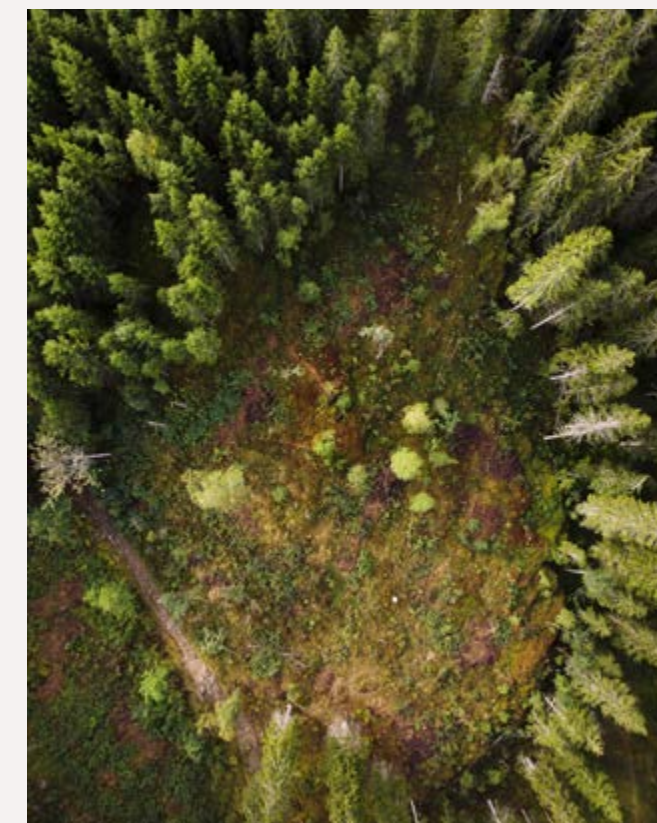
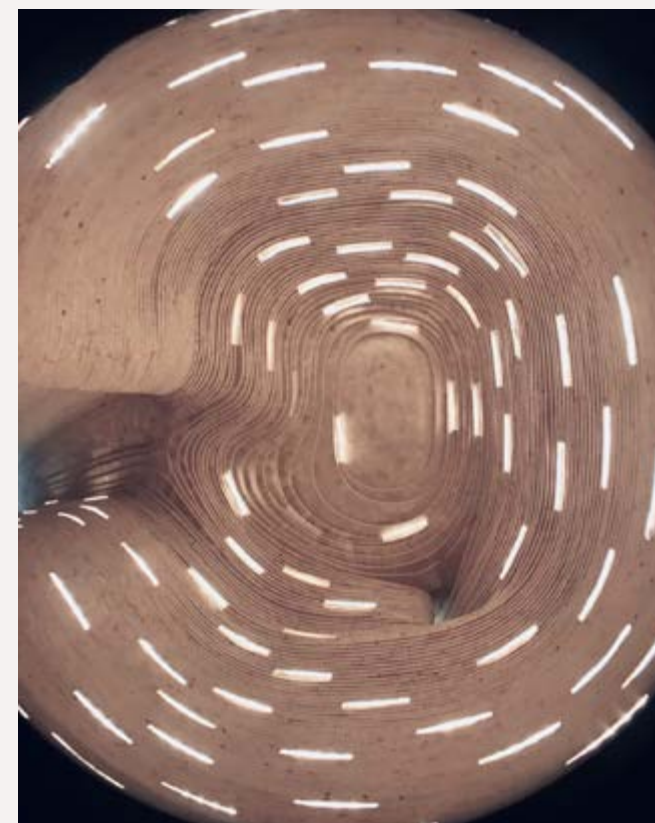




The materiality of trees, as paper, as books, has always been at the core of the artwork. It's how my vision of Future Library arose; I saw tree rings as chapters in a book. A forest of growing words. A world of objects around us are made from trees. Libraries are forests and vice versa. It's a simple enough reflection, yet somehow passes us by. Trees are the lungs of the world. We share a quarter of our DNA with trees, they are our life source, yet Earth has lost more than half of its trees since humans first started cutting them down. We are destroying rainforests so quickly they may be gone in 100 years. The world faces unprecedented wildfires. I believe that human beings are not separate from nature but an interdependent part of the living planetary whole. The planet and all life it supports are deeply interconnected, and we can face up to the climate catastrophe more effectively when we use our senses and connect on an emotional, intuitive level.

We planted 1000 Norwegian spruce in 2014, as saplings. Each year for the handover we tie a ribbon around these seemingly vulnerable trees, which are now over a foot. When Han Kang arrived in Oslo, she immediately wanted to greet the trees, and to thank them for carrying her words. I also feel a direct bond with these little trees, as I live my life alongside them.

Katie Paterson, Future Library, 2014-2114.  
Images by John McKenzie, Giorgia Polizzi,  
Atelier Oslo, Lund Hagem, Katie Paterson,  
Rio Gandara / Helsingin Sanomat.



Future Library unfolds over a century. It takes place over slow-time, and embraces a deep time perspective. We commission a new author every year, we gather in the forest every spring, and the artwork unfolds at the pace of tree growth, with the changing seasons, not by the norms of a public-art commissioning timetable. I don't think these time spans are new for us, but are perhaps lost or forgotten. 100 years is not very long. It is just beyond most of our life-spans and so allows us to consider our own mortality, and to imagine all those unborn who will come after us alive now, and walk in the same footsteps. I believe we have to learn to see future generations, and connect with them with just as much respect as to those living now. Expanding our time horizons to envisage a longer-now is the most imperative journey any of us can make.

Margaret Atwood described the project as 'a tribute to the written word, the material basis for the transmission of words through time – in this case, paper – and a proposal of writing itself as a time capsule, since the author who marks the words down and the receiver of those words – the reader – are always separated by time.' She says Future Library 'will contain fragments of lives that were once lived, and that are now the past. But all writing is a method of preserving and transmitting the human voice. The marks of the writing, made by ink, printer ink, brush, stylus, chisel – lie inert, like the marks on a musical score, until a reader arrives to bring the voice back to life.'

I like very much Margaret Atwood's description of the human voice being brought back to life. I believe that the manuscripts are carriers of voices that resonate organically through the trees as they are grown. And carriers of languages, which now, in 2020, that we don't know will exist by the time the books are printed. As Sjón said, Icelandic is a minority language. Languages, like species, go extinct, and this project is one of preservation.



Aphra Shemza\_Totems I-I.IV (Daylight)  
Image by David Wilman

## A Drop In The Ocean

Aphra Shemza

29/07/2020 11:03 - 11:47

**Aphra Shemza** is a London-based multimedia artist. She is the granddaughter of the well-known abstract painter Anwar Jalal Shemza. Inspired by her grandfather, her work explores Modernism, her Islamic cultural heritage, sustainable practice and creating art for all. As an artist and activist, she finds ambitious ways to fuse methodologies from the past with new innovations in technology to imagine what the role of art could be in the future.

Shemza works in series. Each series has a different thematic exploration and a different aesthetic quality. From migration to climate change, Shemza explores many themes and ideas within her work and advocates for a sustainable practice.





Aphra Shemza, making process.  
 Images by Claudia Agati

I ALWAYS LOOK TO FINDING ways of working in the least damaging way possible. Can you do it with less? Can you be clever about how you integrate that into the materials that you're using? It is however a lifelong journey and challenge to really keep this core value integral in my practice and make sure that I stay true to that. It's not easy to do it and it's not cheap. I've certainly not got it all figured out. I am so aware that we're just a drop in the ocean, a tiny drop, just beginning this journey. So I am not saying, you've got to work like this. The challenge is finding your own voice and figuring out how to use it in a non judgemental, open, encouraging way.

Plastic Recycling:

1. Cutting
2. Sorting
3. Melting
4. Marbling
5. Pressing
6. Shaping
7. Sanding
8. Lighting

Reclaimed Timber:

1. Planing
2. Cutting
3. Drilling
4. Shaping
5. Routing
6. Embedding technology
7. Oiling



Afterglow.  
Image by boredomresearch

## Fictional Frontiers

boredomresearch /  
Vicky Isley and Paul Smith

23/07/2020 11:03 - 12:11

**boredomresearch** is a collaboration between British artists Vicky Isley and Paul Smith, their work is underpinned by a rich understanding of the mechanisms of the natural world. Collaborating with world leading science institutions since 2014, boredomresearch have created award winning artwork developed from ground breaking research.



Robots in Distress.  
Image by boredomresearch

THROUGHOUT OUR WORK, EVEN when you go back to the really early days of our research, there's a melancholy there, a little bit of darkness. But even when dealing with subjects like cancer or looking at things to do with the fragility of natural systems, we always want our expressions to recognise the inherent beauty of those structures. We try to separate ourselves from a way of engaging and just look at what we see in that system that's beautiful. Yet, there is always this slight tone of darkness in everything.

We don't always frame our projects in a way that you have to understand all the science behind it, you can just go into an installation and maybe not even know about malaria or the hazards of plastic waste and we're fine with that. With art there's a process and that expression is a different way of knowing.

We started working as artists with an interest in computational tools. There was something that we felt that we could do artistically with those tools that was unique, that couldn't be done in any other form. We look at a natural system, think about the mechanics of that system, express them as a set of rules and then create a visual expression of those rules; an image based on the behaviour that we can see. We think about forms and interactions between things and the computer provides a unique affordance to create expressions of nature. That's really how we got into using technology.

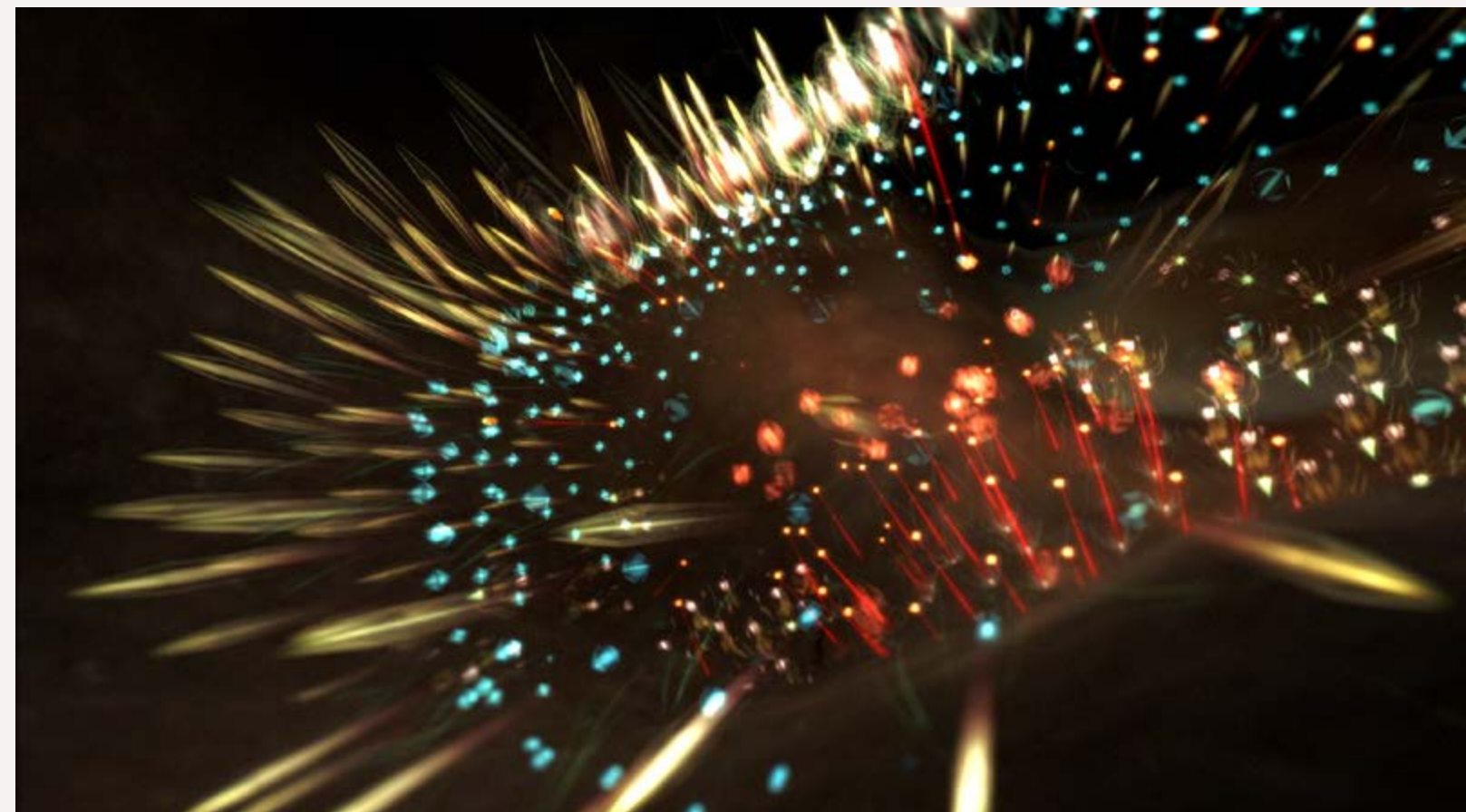
Awareness of the fragility of systems provides an interesting crossover during scientific collaborations. Where science makes use of computation to model systems to generate insights and understanding, we've been doing the same thing but not to generate insights alone but to create visual expressions of those ideas. It also gives us a common language, when speaking at length to computational scientists about their models. In some contexts, when working with scientists, you have a complete buy in because they recognise the value or they're passionate about that way of thinking or they relish the opportunity to think about their own work in an interesting or novel way.

We will always try to start off new collaborations with scientists making it quite clear that we're not here to serve science, we're here as independent artists.

We're here to help form those missing links between the kind of science that happens with privileged individuals behind closed doors and other ways of thinking about human or other expressions of human culture that are often impacted by science. We are also explicit from the start of a collaboration that we tend to not be prescriptive with the idea, which actually can be quite challenging. We let the idea come from the collaboration. We enter a lab with our own ideas and areas of interest which then blend, combine and grow during the collaborative process; fed by the imagination and creative thinking of the scientists we work with.

We try to find what you could call a 'fictional frontier' where idea or hypothesis generation is more a consequence of imaginative thinking, imagining things that have yet to be proven, or where the evidence is incomplete. We like to start from that place.

The rigid constructs of science can sometimes limit the freedom a scientist has to explore their subject and art can provide a safe space to explore ideas that remain vague or unconventional. There are ideas that may be more personal to the scientist but which may not sit comfortably in a competitive funding environment; one that encourages a bias towards science that answers an urgent need. Art has a very different sense of urgency and presents a different set of opportunities. Once science labs or research groups get that, they go 'actually we can use art as a vehicle to look at things that are really important to us'. Important at a level that transcends the business of science and instead reflects a passion for the beauty of the world as they see it.



In Search Of Chemozoa.  
Image by boredomresearch

*We're here to help form those missing links between the kind of science that happens with privileged individuals behind closed doors and other ways of thinking about human or other expressions of human culture that are often impacted by science.*

# Change The Narrative

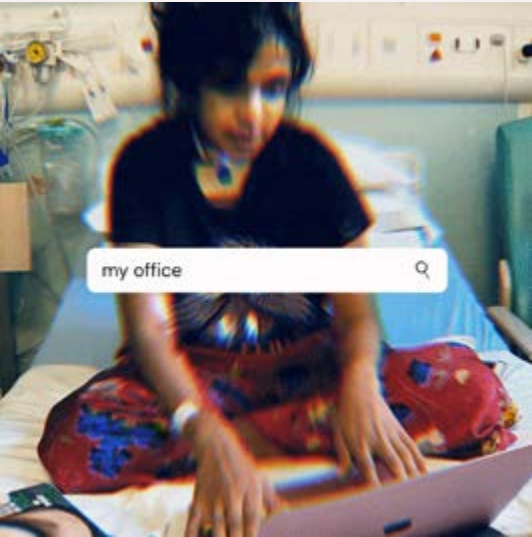
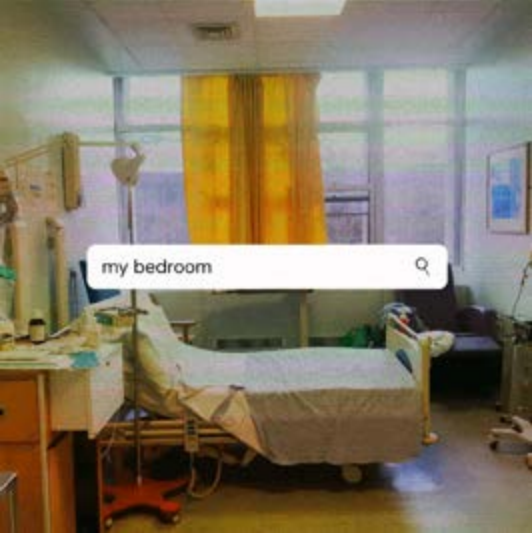
Bhavani Esapathi

01/12/2020 15:41 - 16:21

**Bhavani Esapathi** is a maker, creator and writer finding social-tech solutions to those on the margins of our society. As a disabled, woman of colour many of her projects begin through personal struggles and others that we hear from the larger community.

Over the years, she has mentored artists and startups in the creative industry, undertaken research based projects for The British Council, Facebook Inc. alike on creative startups and health data and shared knowledge widely in conferences and festivals.

Recurring themes in her work include invisible disabilities, autoimmune diseases, patient-led healthcare, immigrants' access to healthcare and digital solutions for social problems. She is proud to be in the RSA's Fellowship Council for London while also building The Invisible Labs platform for chronically abled individuals like herself.





I'VE STRUGGLED WITH THE IDEA OF CALLING myself an artist. Growing up in India I have had it instilled in me that an artist is someone who paints and paints well. I've instead made my peace with calling myself an activist and a maker, because that encompasses more.

The one true thread across all of my work, and through the years, is that almost everything that I undertake, has had a direct impact on my life, not just professional and personal, but all of it. This gives me access to confidently speak up and share things without feeling like it's right or wrong, because it's just an event that I'm sharing. Looking back, it feels like a wonderful creative strategy to have but I think it started out as a coping mechanism.

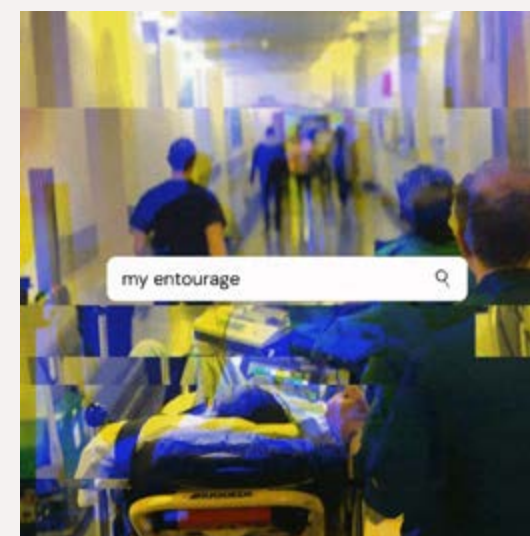
I think there is this overwhelming burden of feeling stuck and trapped when you have to constantly refer to someone else's definition and having to ask - *what do you allow me to do?* When I was a kid, and I was hospitalised all the time, I apparently said things like, *my brain doesn't feel too happy or my brain feels very tired.* I could have gone into a schizophrenic rabbit hole, and this might just be a coping mechanism cultivated from a young age, but it allows me to say - *you don't feel well, that's fine. It doesn't matter if you spend all day in bed.*

I studied clinical psychology for seven years and they say you can change the narrative to help people see differently by imagining yourself as a different person experiencing the same thing or asking if you thought you knew the answer, what would it be? I use that theory and philosophy, the idea that when you ask a question, somehow the answer is in the question, you just need to see it. So if someone is newly diagnosed, and thinks *what can I do now that I couldn't before?* I think it's a wonderful and a very necessary, constructive way of telling your mind that there are other things that you're not looking for, which could possibly help you.

When people ask me, what is the hostile environment? to me it's not about different things they're doing, of course that's a manifestation. But it's instead about overwhelming you so that you're unable to see the options in front of your eyes. Because if there is a problem, there is a solution, it just depends if you can get through the clutter to see it. As human beings, we're constantly seeking validation, but if you can cut out the middle bit of someone else doing the job for you, you can just say, *I have no idea. I just know there is a solution to what I want to do. I just have to wait to figure it out.*

I've only been exploring migratory politics through my work in the last three years. Because I felt like I finally had enough horrible experiences to speak confidently about it. I've been on a journey of learning about all the ways migrants and immigrants get represented that is harmful to the community. Media attention is equal to negative, even for those who want to do good. And this is something that I've experienced a lot more with invisible disability and chronic conditions, it's almost as if nobody wants to help someone who is capable, but just needs some support to get through, even though that's often the argument from the Tories that we don't like giving handouts. There is a disconnect between how things are represented and how they are. So when it comes to storytelling, I like to sit down with the person and ask them - *which aspects of your story are you most afraid of or don't want people to know?*

I have the fortunate, or unfortunate, position of understanding how climate action and climate activism is viewed, in both India and the UK - wildly different economies with very different demographics. Climate activism is seen by the majority of people as an elite choice; buying organic or being able to shop at certain places or paying 20 quid extra for a T-shirt that looks and feels the same, but it's been made in a more sustainable ethical manner. I realised that I nowhere fit into this demographic; no one would look at me and think, *Oh, I do nice things for the planet.* Because people can presume that I might not come from the economic social class to be able to afford these things.



When I've dug deeper than surface level and if you actually look for it, you will find your community and you will find people like you. But when I did that - and this is going back five years - and I tried exploring the idea of environmentalism online, on social media and even in conversations there was just a complete shutting down and the idea that if you're not a vegan, or if you eat meat, then you're against the planet. And I mean, sure, it would be more environmentally friendly if we could, farm sustainably and avoid eating lots of red meat and so on, I'm not disputing that, but coupled with my condition, which doesn't allow me to eat vegetables, it kind of magnified the idea of feeling like there's nothing I can do to be part of this. If I changed my diet altogether, then I would just die. So I went through a shift, which made me conscious, after having worked in the invisible health community, that I'm not the outsider, I'm not the outlier, there are lots of people like me with a variety of conditions that, for very many different reasons, don't allow them to pursue this lifestyle. I think most people will acknowledge that money can prevent you from being climate friendly but when it's health it's hard to argue against. And in that I realised that if you are brown, if you have autoimmune diseases where diet is a huge part of being well, then there is no space for you.

This just didn't sit well for me, people saying that we need more people to take on being climate friendly while systematically alienating a huge number of people who also want to do the right thing. So what I work with is trying to change this conversation by using new narratives and by putting together my journey of realising that this is probably not the kind of exclusion that most people will identify with immediately, because we're not just talking about a person who is brown, but a person with a specific set of health conditions that doesn't allow them to eat specific things.

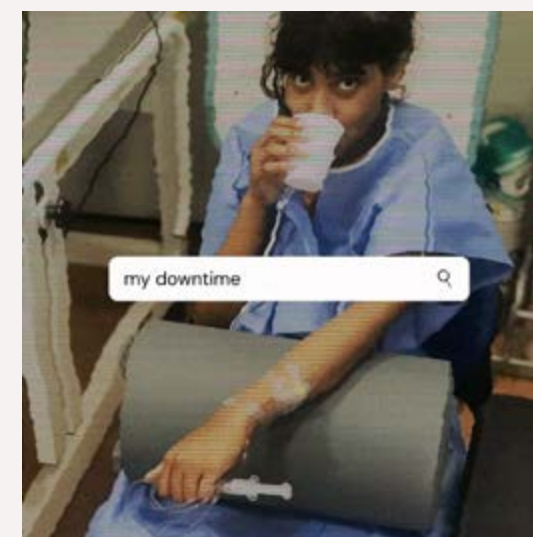
When I began voicing my concerns, and asking - *so what can I do to be part of the climate moment to show solidarity, to support?* There simply were no answers. And that's when I decided to not just volunteer on a basic level, but be part of climate action projects, NGOs such as Medact and the Green

New Deal ([www.medact.org](http://www.medact.org)). Which has allowed me to be in a room of people, who are the eyes and ears of policy and decision makers, to be able to tell them, as I had discovered, that having certain requirements was structurally pushing people away. But being part of a conversation at Medact we can share how we can look at health as a focal point of climate action and ask what can we discover that we wouldn't get if we only looked at farming, or only looked at big capitalistic organisations.

I had a job in 2014 and I got ill after a month and my doctor said you shouldn't be working because your condition doesn't allow you, we will help you get benefits, we will help you out, don't worry about your life. I had to explain that I don't qualify for benefits - I'm not one of you. I struggled immensely at the time to find work that would allow me to work from home - like what you and I are doing right now with millions of people worldwide. It made me so angry when everyone started working from home last year, because I had asked for this with multiple organisations. How much greenhouse gas emissions could we have reduced if we had allowed even just those with chronic conditions to work from home?

There is a similar thing with health care, there is a huge resource in patient communities, who have already figured out alternate ways of being that are genuinely climate friendly. But most climate organisations don't think that's relevant because of the narratives that are being used; that those with disability or long term health conditions are surviving *despite* of their conditions, like they're lacking in something and there's no way they can contribute anything worthwhile back to society.

Even though the loudest voice might be *be a vegan* I can still do my bit through policy thinking and writing and digital activism and other ways. This is where I focus my art making; telling people that you can participate in these other ways. And hopefully, the key voices can understand that at the end of the day alienating those who might not do exactly the things they want them to is detrimental to the cause.



'We are NOT in this Together' by Bhavani Esapathi commissioned by Mainspring Arts.

“Task-scape”<sup>6</sup>

Claire Booth-Kurpnieks /  
Yorkshire Sculpture Park

*In a time in which our daily lives are  
under unprecedented restriction then  
what does contact with art in the  
landscape like this offer?*

● ● small tortoiseshell  
butterfly ·

THE WELLBEING POTENTIAL OF MUSEUM and art galleries has become a topic of interest in recent years; they are being considered beyond their collections as community assets that can help meet local health needs in collaboration with local authorities, and there is increasing attention on how museums and galleries can create spaces for wellbeing<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, attention in health geography has turned towards the capacity of local environments to impact upon community health and wellbeing and the role of place as a structural determinant of health<sup>2</sup>. There are implications here for the contribution of cultural organisations to health and wellbeing through local place-based making practices, particularly outside of urban centres. This has been particularly exposed in light of the corona virus pandemic in which many, during national and local lockdowns, have turned to culture, creativity and nature for solace in times of isolation and uncertainty.

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park, situated in the village of West Bretton, West Yorkshire, is a unique place in understanding the confluence of landscape, art and wellbeing. Narratives of wellbeing have long been inherent within the history and landscape of YSP and the Bretton Estate. Since the 13th century until the mid- 20th century the Bretton Estate was owned by three interconnected families: the Dronsfields, the Wentworths and the Beaumonts.



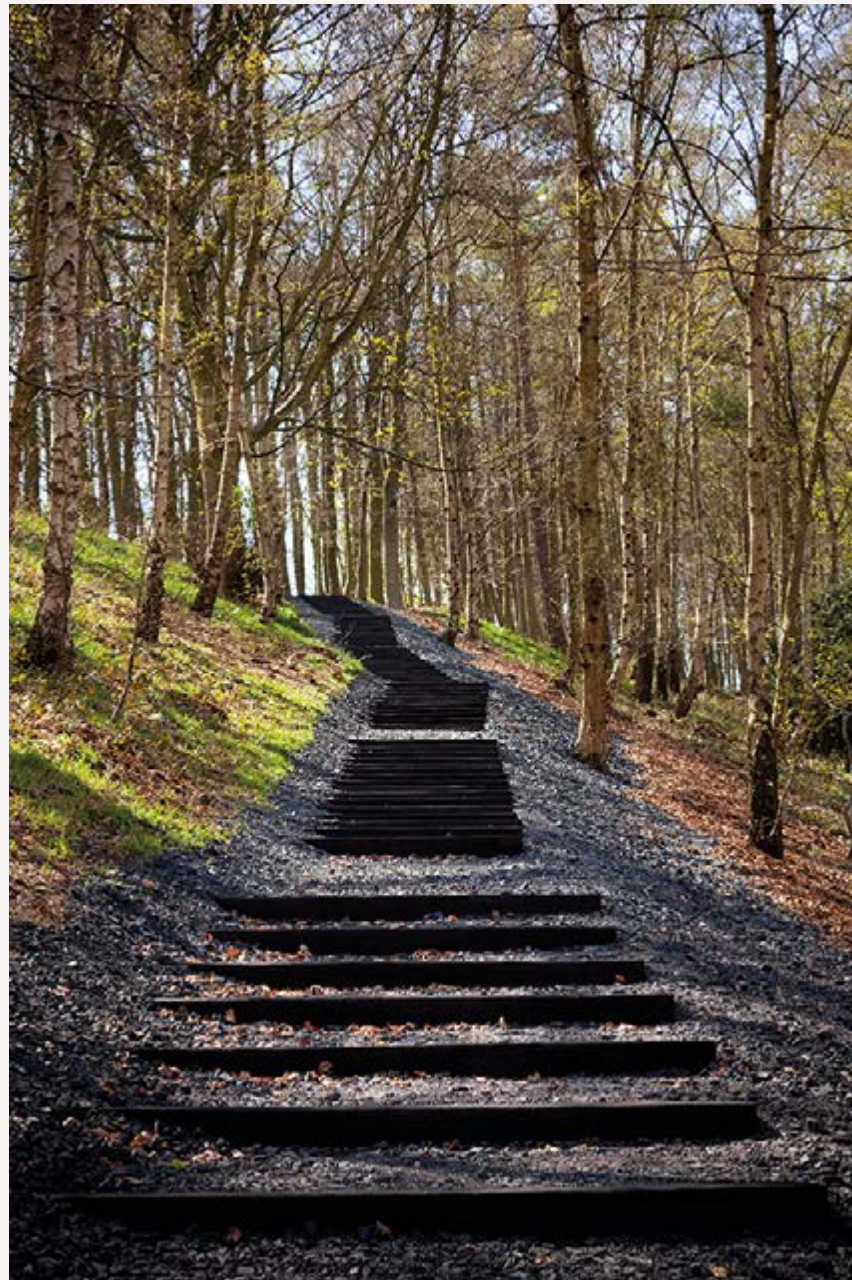
Andy Goldsworthy, *Hanging Trees*, 2007, Courtesy of the artist and Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Image by Jonty Wilde

The establishment of Bretton College on the site in 1949 by the radical educationalist Sir Alec Clegg sought to overturn the function of the estate as a private place for recreation, described as a “progressive, idealistic move in post-war Britain”<sup>3</sup>. The Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) emerged out of the progressive pedagogy of Bretton College in 1977. The space of “retreat” and “refuge”, once the domain of the landed gentry, was now open to the public, with access to art in the landscape embedded within its founding mission. Indeed, from the post-war period onward the political motivation for showing sculpture in the open air, for example the 1948 exhibition *Sculpture in the Open Air* held in Battersea Park, was to democratise access to high quality art outside of the gallery and access to open public space.<sup>4</sup> Henry Moore, an early supporter and founding patron of YSP, in particular was a champion of the political function of art out in the landscape in this respect and felt very strongly that access to open space and nature was a human right.<sup>5</sup>

1. Gordon- Nesbitt, Rebecca. *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. All Party Parliamentary Group for Culture, Health and Wellbeing (2017). <https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/museums-as-spaces-for-wellbeing-a-second-report.pdf>.
2. Atkinson, Sarah J., Sara Fuller, and Joe Painter. *Wellbeing and Place*. London, New York: Routledge, 2016.
3. Murray, Peter. “Introduction.” In *Yorkshire Sculpture Park: Landscape for Art*, edited by Yorkshire Sculpture Park. West Bretton: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 2008. p.7
4. Burstow, Robert. “Modern Sculpture in the Public Park: A Socialist Experiment in Open-Air ‘Cultured Leisure.’” In *Sculpture and the Garden*, edited by Patrick Eyres and Fiona Russell. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
5. Burstow, Robert. “Henry Moore’s ‘Open-Air’ Sculpture: A Modern, Reforming Aesthetic of Sunlight and Air.” In *Henry Moore: Critical Essays*, edited by Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.; and Stephenson, Andrew. “Fashioning a Post-War Reputation: Henry Moore as a Civic Sculptor C.1943.” In *Henry Moore: Sculptural Process and Public Identity*, edited by Anne Middleton Wagner and Robert Sutton. London: Tate 2013.

*There are questions to be raised about whether wellbeing should be within the remit of cultural organisations within a political context that places emphasis on an individual's responsibility to be well as opposed to the structural conditions that make people un-well.*

David Nash, *Seventy-One Steps*, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Yorkshire Sculpture Park.  
Image by Jonty Wilde



The landscape of YSP is a “task-scape”, a layered landscape of activity spanning generations that is continually being actively produced by individuals through their engagement with the site.<sup>6</sup> In research conducted with visitors to YSP between 2017 and 2019 wellbeing was ascribed to YSP and its landscape throughout various stages of a person's biography.<sup>7</sup> It was seen by some as a place to find personal space, where people were using the landscape of YSP as a place of respite or restoration. For others, it was a place that had become embedded within the lives of their families through long-term engagement often over multiple generations. The landscape was described as a place of comfort and safety, the memories inscribed within it were seen as a resource to be drawn upon during difficult times. Alternatively, it was seen as a place to stimulate curiosity and learning, to keep active, or as a place to become part of a community through participating in various groups or voluntary activities. However, it was recognised that these criteria were not fixed and that YSP as both an organisation and a landscape had offered multiple ways to wellbeing at different points within their respective biographies.

The unique qualities of this environment, and the encounters with sculpture in the landscape that it facilitates, creates an atmosphere and space that can facilitate a wide range of experiences

for visitors from feelings of safety and comfort to freedom and surprise that were seen as being valuable to their wellbeing. Sculptures interact with their surrounding environment in different ways. The nine blue-green bronze figures of Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* (1970) appear as if growing out of the ground, rooted within the landscape. However, elsewhere the experience is more jarring, like the monumental, spectral face of Jaume Plensa's *Wilsis* (2016) shifting perspective across the lake. Or the incongruity of the neon letters of Hilary Jack's *No Borders* (2018) glowing in the formal gardens, whose message from aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart ‘NO BORDERS JUST HORIZONS ONLY FREEDOM’ perhaps takes on a different resonance than it would have done a year ago. Other works make this relationship between art and landscape more explicit, with new ecosystems forming within site specific works like Andy Goldsworthy's *Hanging Trees* (2007), in which the felled oak tree suspended within a chamber of dry-stone wall slowly decays highlighting the fragility and permanence of wood and stone, as well as marking the tense boundary between country parkland and agricultural farmland. Or in David Nash's *Seventy-one steps* (2010), in which seventy-one charred oak beams packed into 30 tonnes of coal are slowly eroded back into the land under the feet of the visitors to the park.

6. The idea of the “task-scape” as a dynamic alternative to the static concept of “landscape” emerges in Tim Ingold's 1998 article ‘The Temporality of the Landscape’, republished in Ingold, Tim. *Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London New York: Routledge, 2000.

7. This research was conducted by the author (Claire Booth-Kurpnieks) as part of a Collaborative Doctoral Award between Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the School of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Huddersfield for a thesis titled ‘Does YSP Make you Happy? Investigating Situated Narratives of Wellbeing at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park’, awarded November 2020.

The different routes through the park lead visitors through different kinds of spaces and atmospheres on a temporal journey. Encountering art works in this landscape, whether revisiting old favourites or encountering something new, can facilitate experiences of comfort, friction, belonging and estrangement with each sculptural encounter accumulating towards the whole experience. These encounters with sculpture in the landscape create a space of possibility in which new relationships, experiences and connections are formed- between people and artworks, between people and other people, and between people and the landscape itself. This facilitates a space of encounter dense with inter-subjective experiences allowing visitors to reflect upon their relationships with the artwork, with other people and often their own biography and sense of self. Wellbeing in this sense is not something that is received from visiting a place like YSP, but something that is generated through interactions between people, artworks and landscapes.

However, writing in autumn 2020, discussions about wellbeing, art and landscape cannot be more prescient. The recent national lockdown exposed that YSP is not always a place of public access, like all other museums and art galleries in the UK it was forced to close, unlike a

public park. Now it has re-opened with a ticketing system and restricted points of entry, yet upon admittance the sense of sanctuary and retreat and release is palpable. Walking the peaceful footpath around the lake you could be forgiven for forgetting that a global crisis is ongoing. Yet there are questions to be raised about whether wellbeing should be within the remit of cultural organisations within a political context that places emphasis on an individual's responsibility to be well as opposed to the structural conditions that make people un-well. In this particular context the real questions of accessibility and equity are laid bare. The ongoing lockdowns of Covid-19 have exacerbated existing structural health inequalities and the inequity of access to cultural resources and areas of high-quality greenspace has only become more entrenched- does this then become an issue of social justice as opposed to wellbeing, or as a Moore would put it, a human right? Still in the midst of this state of emergency it's difficult to know in what state the cultural sector will be in when we emerge. In a time in which our daily lives are under unprecedented restriction then what does contact with art in the landscape like this offer?... A space of possibility for new forms of social encounter?... A critical attention to our relationship to place and the natural environment?... A point of connection to a world that is bigger than us?

**Claire Booth-Kurpnieks** is a researcher, writer and curator based in Yorkshire interested in the role of place and place-based making within cultural policy, creative practice and place-based wellbeing.

## Unravel The Intentions

Maya Chowdhry

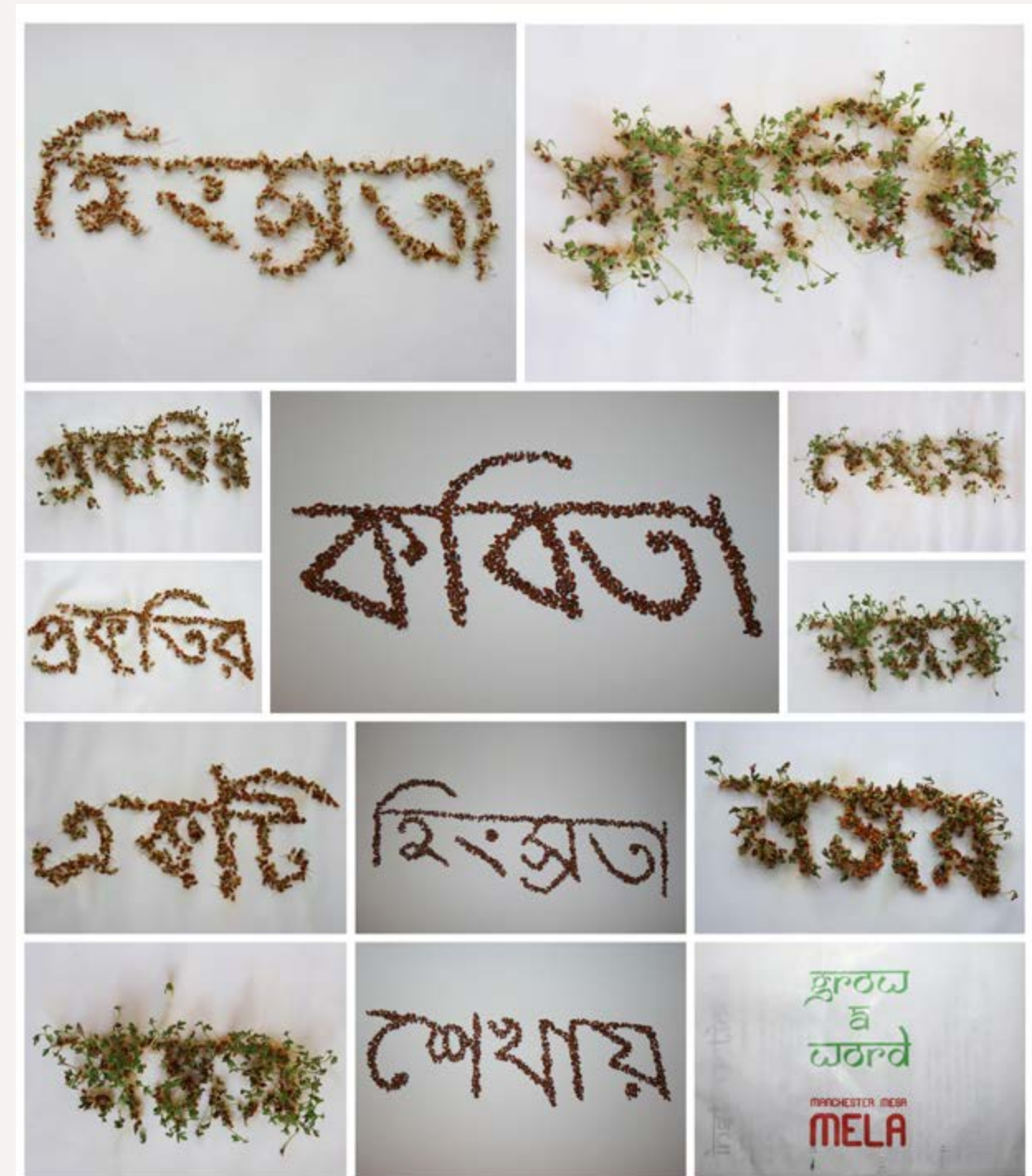
28/7/2020 16:33 - 17:25

**Maya Chowdhry** creates immersive and democratic experiences for participants, drawing from creating work in installation, radio, poetry, video and online. Current work uses the online space for transmedia storytelling, digital poetry and augmented reality artworks.

The themes of Maya's practice interrogate the areas of food sovereignty, world water scarcity and climate justice.

'What's Eating Reality', is an immersive live dining experience, commissioned by Lancaster Arts for the Nuffield Theatre. It utilises digital participatory theatre, live art, video projection and commensality to examine food justice; aiming to transform food consumers into food citizens.

Maya's award winning writing includes 'Butterfly Orchid', highly commended in the Forward Poetry Prizes, 2017 and her collaborative work, 'Tales from the Towpath', an immersive story for Manchester Literature Festival, was shortlisted for the International New Media Writing Prize 2014.



Seed Haiku - Eye on a Word

eye on a word / nature's force /  
teaches us poetry

These photos are from a site-specific Installation made for Manchester Mela, 2011, as part of 'Bollywood Dream Garden'. Using blotting paper and cress seeds I planted a haiku, which grew during the exhibition.



Wyre Salters in collaboration with artist Jessica Mautner, was commissioned by 'Left Coast' as part of 'Banquet', a celebration of food, communities and arts.

We went on a culinary adventure with families in Fleetwood - taking up the challenge of reviving the traditional Wyre industry of sea-salt making and brining, on a micro scale and in a modern and green way.

FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS MY WORK HAS been exploring food justice. Touching on all of the associated complexities and vulnerabilities. Working with communities is integral to my practice. I have a background in participatory theatre and this infuses the processes I use when working with groups to create artworks.

Participation is a core practice. I have always worked in collectives in some form or another. My politics and my activism led me to collective working, to being part of collectively led campaigns and then I was attracted to that way of working in my arts practice. I'm interested in what it is we bring forth with our imaginations when there's more than one of us and the power of that. I'm passionate about the type of deep collaboration where there's multiple imaginations working together and, at the end of the process, we don't know whose words are who's.

The lack of equality and justice in the world is what compelled me to start writing poetry as a teenager, which then led me to discovering film as a way of communicating things that were unjust in the world. Through my participatory theatre work I want to enable participants to work together from an equal playing field. I worked with a youth group in Oldham who said that they didn't have the experience to make a theatre piece or they didn't have the ideas or the stories, but actually they did. It's just a case of allowing the ideas to emerge and putting some tools and techniques into the mix. My artist collaborator and I did a salt making project, working with different community groups

in Fleetwood, Lancashire. We had never made salt before, neither had the community group we were working with, but they knew the Fylde coast. During the project we were looking for areas of clean water to collect salt from, navigating between the power station and the diesel ships, and one participant suggested collecting water from close to the mussel beds. The mussel beds were acting as natural biofilters, cleaning up the surrounding water, so that's where we drew it from.

I feel projects like these must also allow for joyful experiences to be prioritised along with the art-making - one thing that the group really wanted to do was go out on the fishing boat to collect salt-water. They were happy to make the salt, but it was the summer holidays and going out on a fishing boat was a great treat. Sometimes when you work with a group you have to be open to multiple objectives, while for us the question was how do we make salt, for the group, it was a different question. It is important to allow time to unravel the intentions of a project together.

It is pretty hard to keep making protective spaces working in this area. I don't find it easy to not always be thinking about the planet that we live on and who we share it with. I have trained in relational dynamics coaching, learned skills of facilitating at the same time as holding an open space, providing room for the questions to come from within the group. People will take on different roles in a group, and if you're able to let that happen organically, that group will take care of itself.



## Border-becomings

A place of their own /  
Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy

08/07/2020 13:05 - 13:52

**A place of their own** is an experimental contemporary art and spatial practice. They exploit the meeting of these fields to investigate contemporary conditions and create new spaces, imaginaries and subjectivities.

They are Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy and based in Sheffield, UK and Ballyshannon, Ireland. They make performances, spatial interventions and audio-visual art and research.

Their projects explore the transformative potential of art and spatial practice to suggest other worlds yet to become; they are becomings enacted through collaboration, by asking questions, provoking dialogue and testing ideas, and try to prise the production of subjectivity and the radical imagination back from the grip of neoliberal forces.



Elle / Lobster (2019) Seaweed.  
Image by A place of their own

A PLACE OF THEIR OWN IS A SELF initiated practice about collective inquiries - between ourselves, but also our children at their different ages, and about our collective histories, the present and the future, in terms of time but also across scaled temporalities.

Eile Project<sup>1</sup> and our border work grounded A place of their own as a feminist practice. Eile is a longform ongoing exploration of the UK Irish border, encountering the border and using an embodied relationship to that personal and geopolitical landscape to allow us to challenge and critique borders, to reimagine or to imagine alternatives to nation-state borders. How would a 4 year old reimagine it and a 6 year old and a 14 year old?

That exploration of a reimagined border became what we've gone on to call 'border-fictioning'; site responsive art and spatial methodologies reclaiming the subjective and embodied realm of borderlands from nation-state defined borders, to enable new metamorphosed border-becomings. Which we do through site specific performances at different sites along the border. We've been to lochs, caves, barracks, all with a particular kind of history, set of meanings and experiences. Paula plays the character Eile and we produce a series of digital or audio visual films, which include field and audio recordings of the sites cut with cosmic elements from Saturn and other things, so it has a kind of fictioning component built into the filmmaking as well.

Notions of 'geo-power', which come from theorists such as Elizabeth Grosz and Kathryn Yusoff, also underpin our practice, in which we use performance and film to create different ways of comprehending the entanglements between geopolitics, climate, economics, capitalism, race and gender.

We work very much between theory and practice. This allows us to hold a space that thinks between scales, across difference, and within complex entanglements, in the work and as a method; to make different entanglements, which are generative of different types of knowledge or resistant practices. What's really key about this whole way of thinking is that rather than thinking about different bodies, different parts of an ecosystem as interacting and all staying the same in their fixed identities, the idea of intra-action (from Karen Barad) is continual; an ongoing entanglement and where things are always shifting. This helps us to hold on to different discourses, different histories, different practices and to work in transdisciplinary spaces.

There is a lot of trauma involved in the questions of borders. We take a lot of care to position this notion of border fictioning and the privilege that comes with being able to fiction in any situation, particularly before starting to look at borders globally, and the tensions and traumas around that. We ask ourselves a lot about who gets to talk about this stuff and who gets to make this work and who doesn't get to make this work. The importance of situated knowledge is knowing what you bring, what you don't and what your knowledge is.

There are issues that run through the tensions of talking to children about climate change. There are lots of people critical of the notion of the child as this kind of representation of the future somehow. But the difficulties and challenges of talking to children about the future when it's so bleak is a very real concern that runs through our projects, even if it's not explicitly the point of the project.

Eile thinks about Ireland in the context of Brexit and the disaster it represents for the border, but again draws on entanglements and the care of thinking about different spaces; the notion of de-colonialism and the different complex nexus of colonialism within Ireland currently; the policies and procedures in its very problematic history. There is also something that keeps coming up, around colonisation, climate and feminist practice. How do you talk across generations about intergenerational justice, and responsibility and co responsibility? I think that is something that we foreground in our parenting and also in trying to meet the ethics of that as head on as we can.

The biggest challenge that we see in our work and in our lives is how to actually instigate bigger structural change, which is clearly needed in so many different ways.

Kathryn Yusoff<sup>2</sup> makes an argument for the whole of geology; our understanding of rocks in the earth and carbon, as being a fundamentally white construct. So our whole understanding of it is fundamentally colonial - a massive project on a global scale, determining so much of what we can do. We ask ourselves in this context what kind of an art practice could offer alternative imaginaries, against imaginaries that dominate and how can we provide the conditions where other imaginaries might be able to be generated?



Elle / Bog (forthcoming film 2021)  
Image by A place of their own

1. <http://aplaceoftheirown.org/eileproject/>

2. A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None by Kathryn Yusoff, University Of Minnesota Press (2 Nov. 2018)

KNOCKvologan Studies /  
Rutger Emmelkamp & Miek  
Zwamborn



**KNOCKvologan Studies** is a remote refuge for art, literature, research and nature preservation situated on the Isle of Mull.

KNOCKvologan Studies believes that a landscape, looked at through different eyes, worked with and mapped out in omnifarious and sensory ways, will grant new insights and outlooks, generate stories and offer possibilities for a more sustainable relationship between humans and their habitat. They aim to contribute to a smarter and more sustainable culture, enhancing biodiversity and thus the health and prosperity of ourselves and the environment.

As a creative hub KNOCKvologan has the capacity to imagine alternative possibilities. By initiating art and literature-based projects they conduct a constant flow of experiments which inspire new ways of thinking, making and living. With an artistic mind-set, they look to disrupt the conventions of organisations, bureaucracy, consumer behaviour and government. Through beauty, they aim to show fresh and inspiring perspectives on the world around us.

**Tireragan, Land of Angry Waves  
- Prologue to a letter**

Flooded mountains full of hovering, floating, flying, diving, spiraling, propelling, drilling and crawling esprits. Near the coast clear permeable water encounters growth of stems and strands, flows into kelp forest. A dashing dark green border that demarcates the south side. When the tide drops, a crackling moonscape of draped bladder wrack emerges. Laver stretches tightly over the rocks. Just above, tidal pools inhabited by anemones, limpets and mussels. Birds act against further loss of the once tall mountains. The crests are topped with hummocks; dome shaped grass covered mounds, built for look-outs. Injected by the bird's

nitrogen they grow faster than the hills flatten.

Tireragan arose from harsh granite. It has become an archive of dead and living species, some elements are 414 million years old, some just seconds.

We imagine a letter to introduce ourselves. We are regulars, but not sure if we have been noticed. We may not matter. Individual deer aren't seen either; it is the continuous deer-presence that has impact. Robins trail gardeners and in forests they follow wild boar. It is the boar-acting that the robin appreciates in the gardener. They are much alike.

Writing a letter to a non-human

entity comes with difficulties and writing to an entire biotope is even more complex. Whom to address? The tortuous oak? The glacial striations? Or shall we speak to the details trusting that the message will be passed on. Every time we plod through Tireragan so many questions pop up which none of our field guides could answer.

As whom or what do we relate and write to Tireragan?

Tussocks of purple moor grass. Like numerous apple cores lined up, their crowns form an almost closed canopy under which slow streams of water meander. Voles shoot through tunnels of dead leaf matter. A subterranean world with a rainwater induced tidal range

of its own. In open bits, soggy sphagnum moss slows up water flow. Remains of a moth amongst glistening hair-like tendrils of the round-leaved sundew. An adder basks in the sun. Its zig-zag pattern is disfigured by a swallowed something. When groaning ankles approach, it slithers off inaudibly. A tired foot slips off a bulging pillar and pokes deep into the squelchy mass. As the other foot finds stable ground, the sunken one works its way up. Tightened toes, calf and shin prevent the boot from staying behind. The sound of suction.

Drizzle peppers branches, becomes down-ding that rolls along and clings to the tips of twigs. In every drop the forest dangles upside down. Too much water slides

from the stems and soaks into the mossy spatterdashes that all trees seem to wear. Rain collects itself, searches for fine grooves, grinds out existing channels, more water flows down the slope via paths, four waterfalls meander side by side along the rowan blown over by the storm. Its root ball slowly crumbles. The surface veined by white clotted water coming from everywhere, breaking silence with its expressive applause while roaring coastward.

We cannot cross here. The waves coloured by peat capsize in the sea. The river protrudes like a rectangular volume, the ocean and peat water mix way beyond the surf. At the edge of the cliff a cormorant spreads its wings, as if

the sun shines.

A bit overwhelmed by the amount of rain we enter the Luna Park, recalibrating our legs, one high up - one down, crosswise, backwards on sliding soil, grabbing brittle branches. Suddenly we find ourselves in the middle of a dense hazel wood and for a second it seems dry. The many slender stems arising from the rootstock are mottled with mosaics. Script lichen have engraved their braille language on the smooth bark; we try to read the elongated, sinuous, contorted scribbles but our fingertips don't understand. When we look back through the scrub, we see that we've ploughed a trail, our presence captured for days alongside other hoof prints.

These photographs are taken with a lensless pinhole camera. Due to the infinite depth of field, slightly blurred results, long exposure times and absence of a viewfinder, pinhole photography is ideal for approaching the natural world in a non-hierarchical way. There is no protagonist in these photographs, nor is there a specific moment in time captured. These are just given situations that are there always.



A crack. Someone else in front of us in a hurry, the move of something heavy, we see just the pale butt, still in summer coat, it jumped, we smell its strong odour. We follow and there it stands, motionless. We look each other in the eye; startled, surprised, equally curious.

Bright colours are hidden under a spacious upholstery. Violet red, yellow ochre, Persian blue and white. Fragrance floating up from foxglove, orchid, primrose, honeysuckle, bluebell, bramble, bedstraw and bog star. We challenge our nostrils to distinguish the subtle scents that roam around the omnipresent

perfume of the damp soil that spreads a dark sweetness, newborn and rotten at the same time. When the sun appears after a few days of rain, water filled underground towers push their caps up rapidly. They never rise alone but form duo's, groups, circles. They stay ibidem but incessantly underneath our sight. We foraged a hat full of chanterelles and ate them with the mackerel and a few new potatoes from the garden while bickering about the hole of the woodcock where we installed the camera trap and only captured a dwarf mouse at nighttime that looked in the lens and winked.

Zooming in on our high res

satellite map one can just about distinguish the typical patterns of lazy beds. Parallel lines positioned perpendicular to drainage ditches. Once you see a patch you start to notice many. Remains of arable land. People around open fires in black-houses. It took many hands to build a roof. The bracken, which has now confiscated the worked soil, was pliant enough for thatching just a little while. Too few hands and things fall apart. No human lives here now. Inside the round cornered ruins live foxgloves and rowans emerge from the dry-stone walls. With some ruins the door joist is still in place. With most these have crumbled down and sank back into the

earth. In between some overgrown stones we found a knife and bottle carefully tucked away.

Quivering fibrous edge. No sloping bank. The water is black and deep right away. A backswimmer approaches and continues underneath us. Where we stand is no ground. The floating peat moss web is just rigid enough to hold our weight. The pool is the closing eye of a giant water bubble suspended above a dramatic pink-granite topography and held in place by millennia of peat-moss built up. Wrong place to be for a large mammal. This water saturated land is carnivorous. A sheep's carcass in a grazing

position is half way gone. Puddles of red water form around every footstep. The friction of the land makes us wonder if we can live here, or if we will remain guests.

The call of the cuckoo omnipresent. Skylark above. We are neither.

The days and nights we've spent in Tireragan feel like catching up; tapping into lost knowledge, lost habits, becoming familiar, becoming regulars, natives maybe. The land here makes us do what many have done before. We find overgrown trails dictated by the hills and bogs and have conversations that were held

centuries ago.

This ancient land looks inviolable, but things aren't the same. Our knowledge has shifted. We know more and less. We don't fit as seamlessly as we once did.

Sitting on a rocky outcrop, granite crumbles mixed with crottle imprint our buttocks. We've escaped from the midges in the forest. Deer move to exposed places when the wind drops too. Midges influence grazing patterns. They are also the cause of underexposed photographs. We could not sit through the entire six minutes' exposure time and wrapped up a little too early.

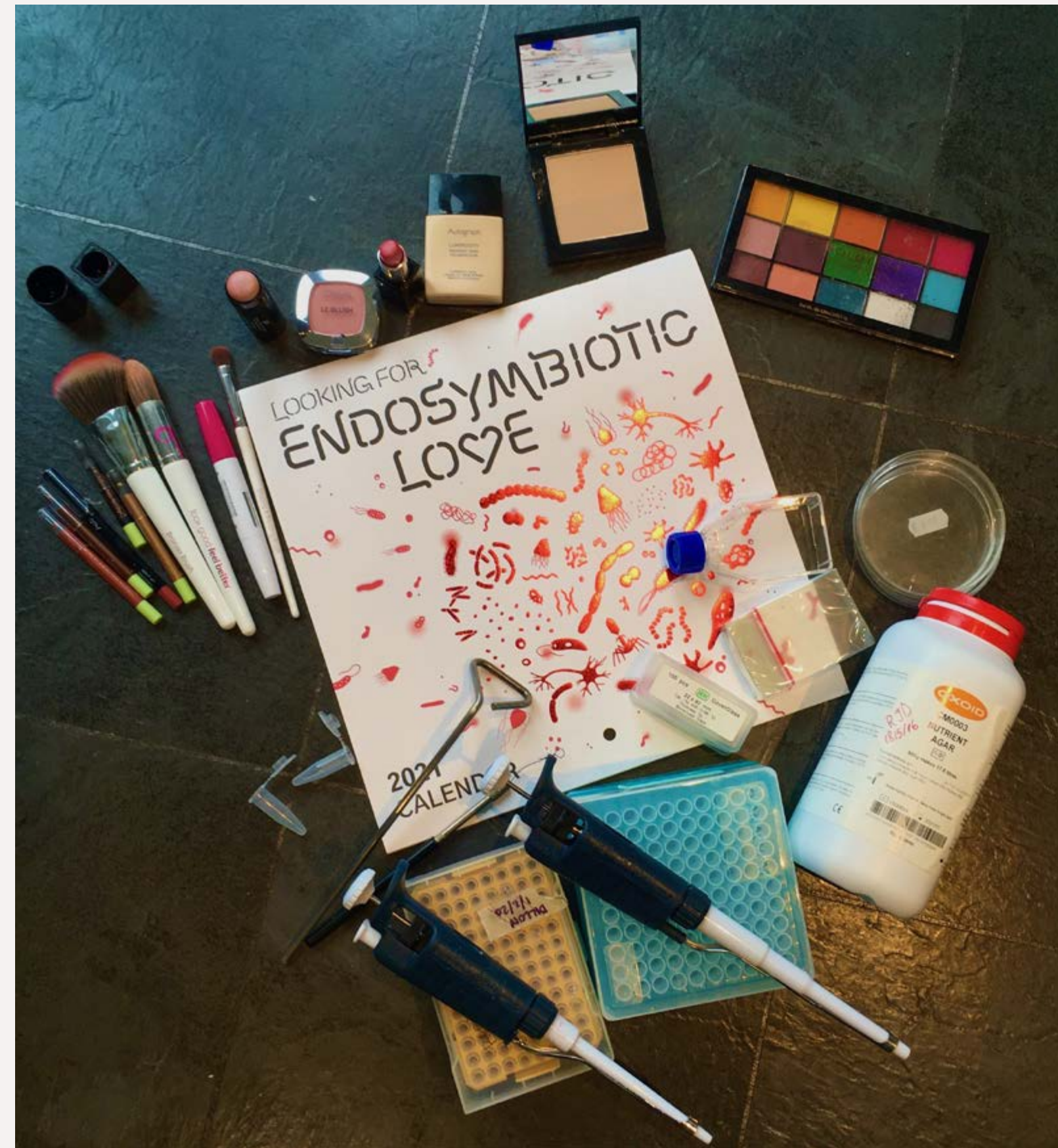


## Everything Is Connected

Hwa Young Jung

25/02/2021 11:13 - 12:15

**Hwa Young Jung** is a multidisciplinary artist working in the arts, cultural and sciences, facilitating collaborative projects and workshops. She works with people to co-create projects, often using games and play to explore social issues. Based in the Northwest (of England) she has been producing work with a range of people (Young People in libraries, care workers, freshwater biologists, criminologists) in England and internationally for almost ten years.



Endosymbiotic Love Calendar, Front Cover.  
Image by Rod Dillon





Endosymbiotic Love Calender, *Giardia duodenalis*, Protist. Dee Walshe and Tammy Reynolds. Photo: Christopher Connor.



Endosymbiotic Love Calender, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, Unicellular fungi. Conway McDermott and Viv Dillon. Photo: Ryan Ygnacia Munguia.

I WAS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN WORKING with people and solving problems together. I use a little bit of the allure, and mystique of an artist in order to go into spaces and ask things without seeming rude. I'm trying to use the term artist tactically to look at social issues, which is what I'm actually interested in; how people make decisions collectively.

I work with scientists a lot, mostly microbiologists. And one of my bugbears about art and science collaborations is that they are often weighted to either the art or the science. If it's weighted towards science, then the art becomes decorative. And if it's weighted to art, then the science becomes performative.

With the *Endosymbiotic Love Calender* I wanted to have a project where we could put the artists and the scientists on equal footing. I want to see how far I could push each field, bringing their own expertise and see what new knowledge could be created by coming together around the single topic of queering microbes; questioning binary identity from a scientific point of view and a gender point of view from queer performers. One of the things that was underpinning the whole project and all the people who are collaborating with us, is this idea of love and acceptance of difference and I hope that showed.

A lot of my thinking around how social issues should be solved has to do with addressing the context of how everything is connected. When I worked with men on probation and looking at the criminal justice system, you couldn't do it without also looking at looked after children. We made a board game, called *Probationary*, with the men and their probation officers and criminologists, about what it's like to be on probation. It became so clear that a lot of the men had a really shitty deck of cards from the beginning. It wasn't inevitable that they would end up where they were but they just had

so much disadvantage from the beginning. There were points when society had missed or failed and if there was a more preventative approach to bigger social issues, then you wouldn't need to spend more on doing bandage work.

When you start seeing all the connections and how everything's connected, then that's how I felt I could address the climate crisis; by doing what I'm good at, which is working with people. Not everyone has to go out and march and be arrested, because not everyone has that privilege. But the thing with the system is that you can't change it if you don't know it and just because you're in a system doesn't mean you know it.

I am working with a group of young people in Peterborough who've been excluded from mainstream education on a project called *Wild Is The New Normal*. I want to get their thoughts on the nature that's close to them, which is urban wildlife. City wildlife that might be called pests, like pigeons or rats or squirrels, but then also bees and explore how to make decisions about what and who belongs where and who makes those decisions. I'd like to explore this with the kids, because they already have experience of being excluded from mainstream society and examine how collectively we can build a better future with animals.

The reason I like games and playing is because it allows us to experience extreme emotions in a safe way. I want to find ways to collectively dream of better futures and to make it real, at least in a game form. You can make the connections because you're going through that process as you're playing it. There's a safe space and there's multiple ways to play it, the ending is always different, no matter how many times you play it. And I think that's the beauty of pretending. There's also no real world consequences to playing a game, but you could try out things.



Endosymbiotic Love Calender, *Shigella*, Bacteria. Emmanuel Laplantine and RJ Lloyd. Photo: RJ Lloyd. Makeup: Carmen Arquellades



Endosymbiotic Love Calender, *Wolbachia*, Bacteria. Tammy Reynolds, Yasmine Kumordiz and Rod Dillon. Photo: Christopher Connor.



For me now it's not enough to just make something with people with that lived experience if it's not seen by people who have control over that system being made. Otherwise, it might fall into the trap of community or participatory art that is part of the conservative neoliberal agenda of dismantling the welfare state by misdirecting or reallocating funds to support people into art activities.

So there's a strand of activism in the work that I do now, especially related to the criminal justice system. In partnership with the Howard League for Penal Reform (<https://howardleague.org>) and a criminologist where they sit alongside the work that I do to advise me and provide statistics so that this work can be taken to people who work in the criminal justice system, or to policymakers so that there can actually be change and it's not just a feel good exercise.

We've taken *Probationary* to the Probation Policy Team at the Ministry of Justice and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and the HM Inspectorate of Probation, they have played the game and I feel like I have a seat at the table to power. Well, maybe I'm not sitting at the table, maybe I'm serving tea or coffee at the table. But that's where the partnership works for me because they're not going to take me seriously as an artist and this is when the artist label is not an advantage. But I have a solid academic and a charity who campaigns for penal reform with me.

The reason we are able to play this game with so many people within the criminal justice system is because it's a new way to do research, it sounds fun - come and play a board game. It lowers



the barrier to engagement, so they don't have to put more mental capacity into encountering this thing. But also that familiarity allows me to be able to go a lot deeper with the content matter and it's the same with the participants that I work with when I say we're making a game. They've played games, and they know the basic rules of a game and it's not intimidating.

My way to address the climate crisis is through social justice. If you give people enough space and time, they'll be the best version of themselves as long as it's done with care and love. That's one of the important things when I work with people from disadvantaged backgrounds. They're not disregarding the environment, because they're stupid or they don't care, it's just they don't have the mental space. They're not poor, because they're stupid. They're poor, because they have no money.

I did a project with social care workers called *Social Care Improv*. I was trying to look at the care workers and not the people they care for - there's not that much acknowledgement of the people who care for the patient, or the client, as they call them. So I put on an improv night. Care work is done in domestic settings, it's invisible work, it's feminised work, it's domestic and hidden, marginalised and very low paid. I spoke with a lot of care workers and the best definition of what they do is to assist the person to be the best version of themselves, it's not to do stuff for them, to care for someone isn't to feed them, it's to give them the sense of autonomy that they can do that for themselves and that takes time, patience and respect for the other person as an individual.



Probationary Board Game. By Hwa Young Jung. Image by Dan Burns

## Embodied Material Knowledge

Scottish Sculpture Workshop /  
Jenny Salmean and Sam Trotman

SCOTTISH SCULPTURE WORKSHOP WAS founded in 1979 by artist Fred Bushe as a common space for making - to share knowledge, tools, materials and skills. The workshop soon became a hub for artists from across the globe working with stone, wood and metal, a place where they could live and make work alongside each other, situated in a converted bakery in Lumsden, Scotland. Today, more than 40 years later, SSW remains true to this ethos of collective living, making and learning. Artists continue to travel from all over the world for residencies, and we work with artists to produce their ambitious projects.

The collaboration that happens at SSW really makes alternate ways of being in the world feel possible. This possibility might be small - an artist's relationship with a new material or place perhaps, or it could be imagining what a post-fossil fuel Scotland looks like or what fairer governance in the arts might be. This sense of possibility is what has always made SSW feel so quietly subversive. SSW resists commercialisation and the call for growth. Instead it centres its energies on collaborative learning, values what is possible when we connect to each other and the world around us, deeply cares for the people who come here and the place we are situated within.

Lumsden is a small village with 400 inhabitants, around one hour's drive from Aberdeen. Apart from SSW, there is a community hall, primary school and a garage/ petrol station in Lumsden. The workshop is both geographically and infrastructurally isolated - there are few buses and most social service provision is in the town 20 mins drive away. SSW has been present in the village throughout its recent history, with artists involved in the annual Mary Fair, working with children in the primary school and developing projects that explore local knowledge and skills. The iconic orange boiler suits, worn by artists in the workshops and originally donated from the rigs, are ever present walking between SSW, our accommodation and the garage.

As such, our environmental work has always been closely connected to our local communities. In the collaborative project *Frontiers In Retreat* (2013 - 2018), we worked with Finnish artist Mari Keski-Korsu and local Strathorn Farm Stables to develop *Oracles*, Mari's transdisciplinary inter-species communication project. Mari worked with an animal interpreter to ask Clydesdale horses questions on our future relationships with work and land. More recently we have worked with Simone Kenyon to produce *Into The Mountain* (2017-2019), a place-sensitive performance project inspired and informed by Nan Shepherd's text *The Living Mountain*. For over 6 years Kenyon walked and worked with women from the Cairngorm National Park to understand their embodied connection to the mountains. These walkers became singers of a score created by Hanna Tuulikki performed deep within Glen Feshie.



Heightened by the impact of Covid 19 we are increasingly determined to open up SSW to our neighbours as one of the few remaining civic spaces in the village. One way we are doing this is through our large EU Collaboration Project BE PART (short for Art Beyond Participation) which sets out to explore how art can be made collaboratively, by artists and local citizens together and in turn how this work affects how the organisation runs. We will be working on a series of long-term artist-led 'fieldworks' which will examine the relationships at SSW and the structures, processes and policy that underpins how we work together. Here, we hope this will create a shift in how our community is involved in decision making, organising and using SSW.

On site, we run Open Access across all of our workshops, which include a wood workshop, metal workshop, ceramics workshop, forge and foundry (the only open access foundry in the UK). This is open to anyone to use, regardless of their skills or experience in a workshop. Our technicians are incredible teachers, and one of the key aspects of Open Access is that you are involved in every stage of the process. Technicians will support you to do it yourself from start to finish. For us this is a super

important aspect of what we do as it equips people with making skills and an embodied material knowledge of their surroundings. Building an intimate relationship with material, understanding how it feels, acts and is transformed can shift how you understand your place in a wider ecology. In relation to climate breakdown, it gives people the skills to make, transform and build new possibilities for themselves and the people around them.

Recently we have been working to better understand and explore the tensions and entanglements between making skills, material and extraction. The potential in these material knowledges, as we describe above, inherently contradicts the extractive methods and ideology through which material is accessed and manipulated. How do we, as a small making space for artists in the north east of Scotland, situate ourselves within the massive complexity of a capitalist global supply chain? We were lucky enough to start working on this with an 'Infrastructures Intern' – Finn Arschavir. Most clear however is that this is not something that we can ignore and doesn't have any easy answers.

Performative Iron Pour, SSW is 40! (2019).  
Image by Felicity Crawshaw





Sand Pilot, Invisible Flock (2012).  
Image by Ian Hughes

## Across Borders

D6: Culture in Transit /  
Clymene Christoforou

28/07/2020 14:33 - 15:15

**D6: Culture in Transit** are visual arts producers working with extraordinary artists, intrepid partners, communities and policy makers. Their artistic programme explores some big questions around the value and ethics of artistic production and engagement – for whom, by whom, with whom and in response to societal and environmental issues that both unite and divide us.

In a world ravaged by Covid 19, these considerations are even more prescient, exposing the need to move away from the more people less time paradigm - and do things more slowly, more deeply and more meaningfully: to have impact by doing things at a slower pace in order to be kind to each other and our planet and to use our resources more resourcefully; to make real connections and do things well we need to deepen the experience of the artists and the participants and to make it more meaningful we need to listen, to question and respond.



Installing (Dearly) Beloved by Akeelah Bertram  
CONTESTED DESIRES Residency Lagos, Portugal  
Image by Jorge Pereira

## WE ARE ALL PART OF GLOBAL

conversations, we just don't always know it. Our programmes have always tried to unite common issues and concerns. The idea of island culture is interesting not necessarily in terms of an island surrounded by water but considering geographical distance from the capital where you can feel that you're not part of the conversations happening there. We work with artists on projects that look at connecting neighbourhoods on a very local level, but connecting internationally too, creating tools for empowerment and for having a voice. Many of the communities we work with in the north east are islands, far away from the regional capital, from where the decisions are made. Acknowledging that you are separated from the power base of decision making is something that interests us.

D6 has been working with the artist Henna Asikainen<sup>1</sup> since 2016. This ongoing artist-producer relationship has evolved through a research residency, commissions, events and deep engagement between artist, producer and a broad yet transient community of participants. Henna works closely with migrant and refugee communities as part of her work. Importantly she retains an equity in the relationships developed through these projects, she does not directly tell other people's stories but captures them in a more abstract way. She creates space for participants to bring their own objectives to the project, they are not there necessarily because it is an artistic project, but perhaps instead for the sense of community, to learn something about each other, to make the networks that they needed in order to make this place their home.

The Brexit campaign talked about taking back control, the idea that you could go into communities and you could give them back control acknowledges and ultimately exploits the fact that people feel isolated. Our projects cannot change political systems, but we can help to build understandings of what opportunities and voices we can have. There is unity in collaboration across miles, across borders and it is crucial not to forget the importance of internationalism in these conversations.

*Contested Desires*<sup>2</sup> is a transnational cooperation project that we are leading, exploring our shared and contested colonial heritage and its influence on contemporary culture.

At a time of increasing right wing populism, *Contested Desires* aims to challenge the de-stabilising and divisive impact of political discourse where the diversity and expansion of our communities continues to be met with the power play of fear-mongering, discrimination and exclusion. We are creating a capacity building programme for artists and producers engaging with communities and heritage spaces. With a focus on transnational exchange and learning, the programme offers unique opportunities for artists and communities to explore our shared heritage through research, workshops, residencies and exhibitions.

We are operating in a world where we have to produce more in less time; do lots of bits, for lots of people, in as little time as possible. But we know that if you do fewer things, with fewer people over a longer period of time, that experience is much, much deeper. So thinking about the degrowth paradigm, how do we conceive of culture in a way that slows down? If you take more time, then we are addressing the urgency of having to deal with the emergency because we are using less resources to do it? The idea of taking more time to think about things differently and working with fewer people can be difficult, because funders want to see numbers. But I also think it's our job to explain that the numbers aren't everything.

When working with vulnerable communities the question of equity is so important. Who are you doing the project for? What do they get from it? Are you doing something because it makes you feel good about yourself? Or are you doing it because you care about that individual and you're interested in what they've got to say?

1. <http://www.d6culture.org/henna-asikainen-digital-story.html>

2. <https://www.contesteddesires.eu/>



Delicate Shuttle by Henna Asikainen.  
Image by Arto Polus

## A Leaf On My Heart

Majid Adin

02/10/2020 15:08 - 15:41

**Majid Adin** is an Iranian artist and animator who found the inspiration to create art again in the jungle refugee camp in Calais. He was forced to leave his home country, having been briefly imprisoned and politically exiled from Mashhad for his writings and cartoons criticising religious conservatism. He journeyed through Europe, spent several months in the Calais 'jungle', and after many attempts to make the crossing, finally arrived in the UK in a refrigerated van on 20th April 2016, coinciding with celebrations for Shakespeare's 400th anniversary.

In 2017 he won a competition to produce an animation for a music video to illustrate Elton John's song 'Rocket Man', with a tale about a lonely astronaut travelling across continents to a new home in England. Majid is currently writing and illustrating his first graphic novel, *HAMID AND SHAKESPEARE*, inspired by an imagined friendship with Shakespeare.

Majid trained in fine art and painting at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, moving on to animation in graduate school.



*...art can sit alongside fruit  
from a tree as a natural  
product of creation.*



### A Man With A Leaf

I was born on a sunrise  
Lies on the grassroots of an ancient oak tree

The sun is rising  
I am going to be shorter  
Afternoon taller and taller

A leaf on my heart  
Approximately sunset I am complaining to the oak tree from brutality of the sun  
He is silent  
What a relief  
Everything going on his way



The Man With A Leaf On His Heart is an image that holds an entire storyline in one frame, holding the potential for the rest of the animation sitting either side of this still image.

### WE HAVE BROKEN OUR RELATIONSHIP

with the natural world. The modern human is so separate from the river, the sky, the trees, harmony is broken inside and out. The problems of the world lie in our behaviour no longer being connected to nature, we have lost harmony and that harmony is what allows us to access happiness, happiness that can exist within our internal and external selves.

When we watch the sea or a forest we never get tired, it never gets old, but everything man made has a duration and we get bored.

Everytime I go to the forest it gives me a better feeling, we are in harmony, I am nature.

Art can help us find harmony, creating work to help us to be closer to nature, repeat the harmony of nature or work together with the rules of the natural world, in these ways art can sit alongside fruit from a tree as a natural product of creation.

In the whole of history everyone, despite culture or century, connects with nature, with the blue of the sky, with the leaves of a tree, we connect across history and time. 5,000 years ago people were writing poetry about the beauty of a tree, the same as we do today.

We are not separate from nature.

We need to be in harmony.



In Farsi, we call this Taraxacum or Dandelion flower "Ghasedak", **ضطر شججضج** translated into English it means messenger, herald or courier. There is a fairytale, that blowing the seeds into the wind will carry your message to anybody you miss who is faraway. In the 1980s my father and brother were soldiers in battlefields across Iran and Iraq. I believed this story as a child and anytime I saw a Taraxacum I blew it into the wind towards them.

A final thought

So much it seems is about  
those that clamour,  
that fight, move quickly,  
sharply and without care,

Shouting loudly, dominant,  
pushy, insistent.

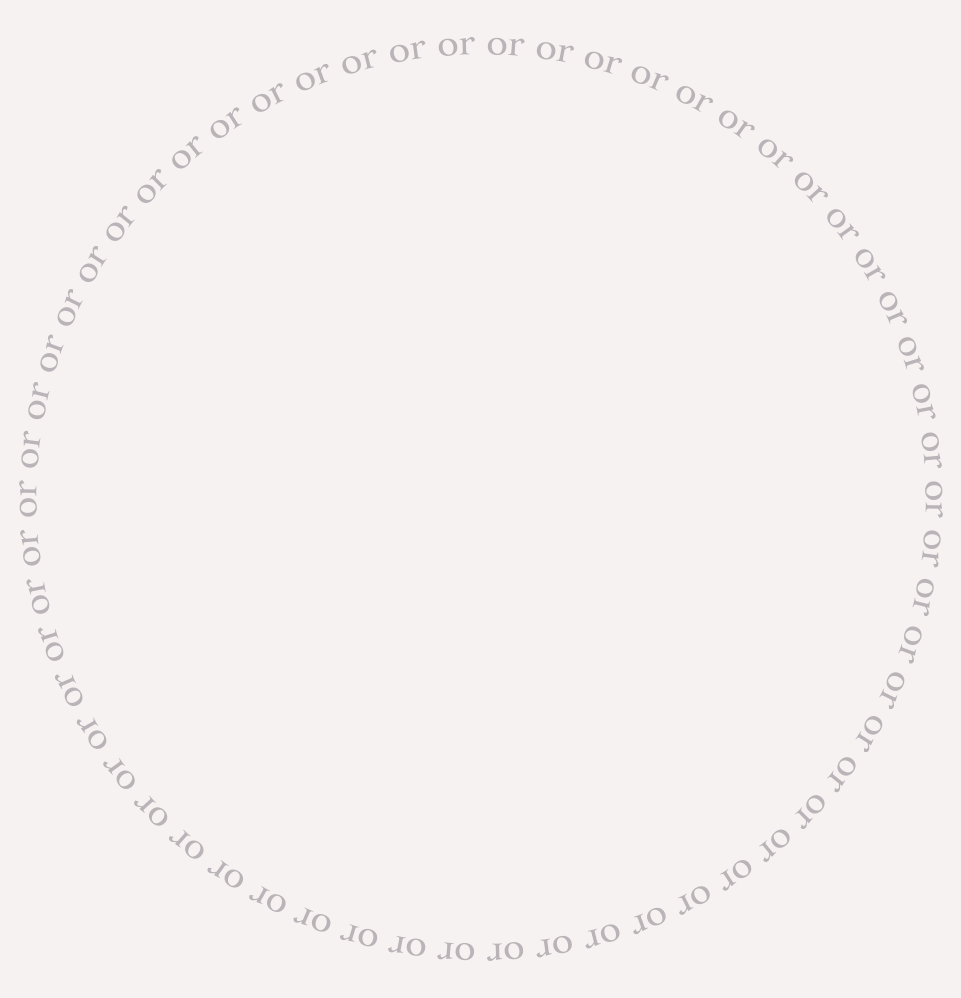
They have such  
large elbows.  
Pointy and bruising

And feet. And sticks.

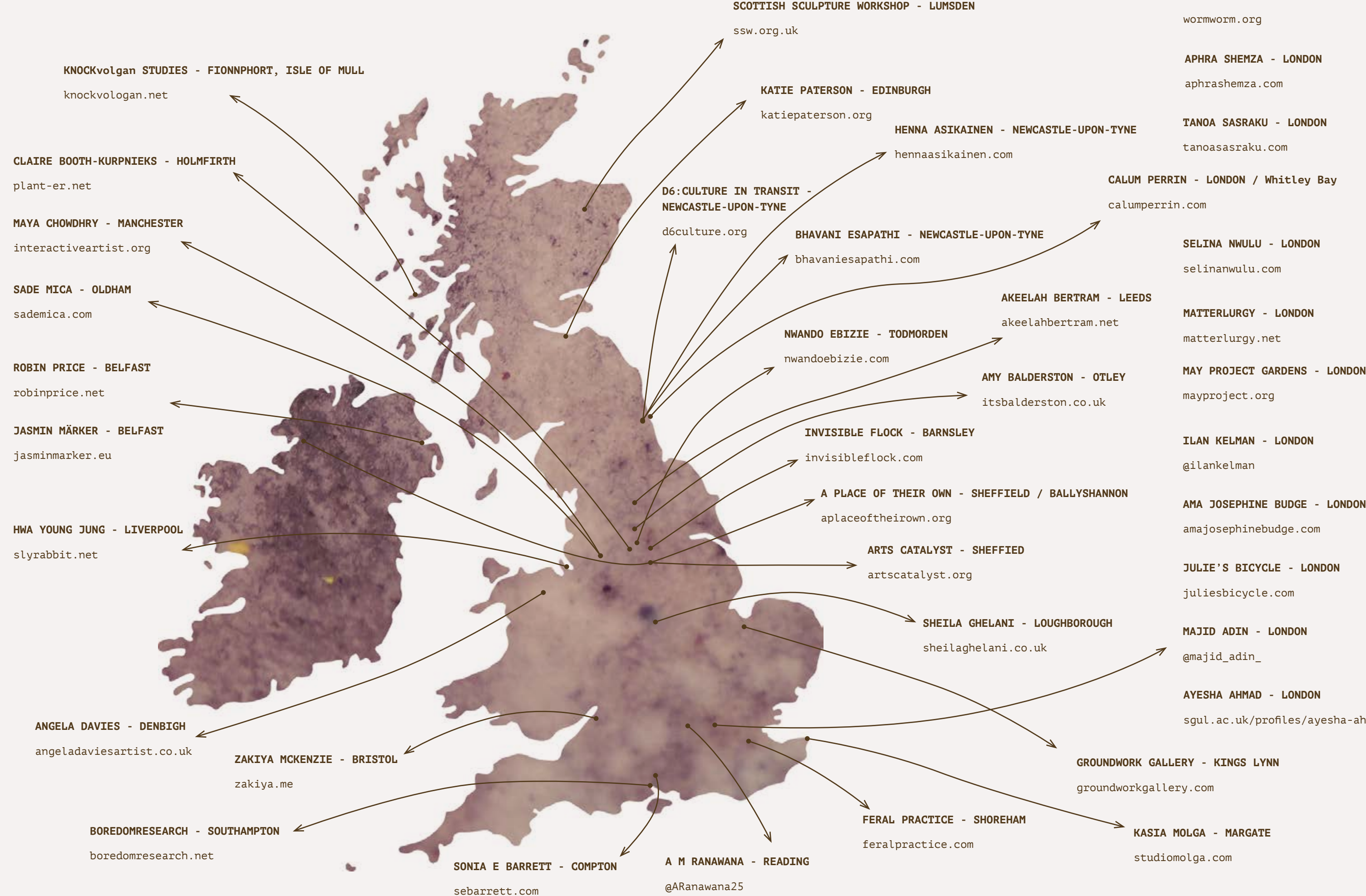
It's easy to forget (in  
the racket of it all).

That there are other ways.

To notice. To see.  
To actively become aware.  
Of lines and lives  
unconsciously overlooked.  
Or forgotten. Or invisible.  
Or silent. Or small. Or  
hidden in the undergrowth.  
Or sat watchful in a tree...



UK MAP



## ENDNOTES

## PAGE 4

**Calum Perrin** is an artist and audio maker from North East England, currently based in London. Their work explores themes of disability, sensory experience and working class domesticity. They are also a trade union activist, campaigning for the rights of artists as a member of Artists' Union England.

## PAGE 14-31

(1) **Ama Josephine Budge** is a Speculative Writer, Artist, Curator and Pleasure Activist whose praxis navigates intimate explorations of race, art, ecology and feminism, working to activate movements that catalyse human rights, environmental evolutions and troublesomely queered identities.

(2) **Alberta Whittle** is an artist, researcher and curator. She was awarded a Turner Bursary, the Frieze Artist Award and a Henry Moore Foundation Artist Award in 2020. Alberta is a Research Associate at The University of Johannesburg. She was a RAW Academie Fellow at RAW Material in Dakar in 2018 and is the Margaret Tait Award winner for 2018/9. Her creative practice is motivated by the desire to manifest

self-compassion and collective care as key methods in battling anti-blackness. She choreographs interactive installations, using film, sculpture and performance as site-specific artworks in public and private spaces.

## PAGE 40-41

(1) **Selina Nwulu** is a writer, poet and essayist with a commitment to social and climate justice. Her poetry and essays have been widely published in a variety of journals, short films and anthologies including the critically acclaimed anthology *New Daughters of Africa*. Her work has been translated into Spanish, Greek and Polish, exhibited on the Warsaw metro and in New York. She was Young Poet Laureate for London 2015-6, an award that showcases literary talent across the capital and she was shortlisted for the Brunel International African Poetry Prize 2019. She is also a 2021 Arts Award Finalist for Environmental Writing.

## PAGE 146-149

(1) This is a list of endorsers who have signed the letter sent to the Secretary of State by **Julie's Bicycle** in June 2020 calling for a just and green cultural recovery, this list

is not exhaustive and continues to be added to by organisations and individuals across the sector in the UK.

## PAGE 70-71

(1) **Sheila Ghelani** is an artist of Indian/English mixed heritage, whose solo and collaborative performances, social art works, installations, texts and videos seek to illuminate and make visible the connections between race, ecology, science, history and the present day.

(3) Here Are Some Thoughts Flowing Like Lava... by **Sheila Ghelani** is an extract from her 16-part performance text *Sulphur* - written in 2017 to be spoken by three voices. *Sulphur* explores climate change through the lens of the element.

## PAGE 86-87

(2) *You And I Are Connected* by **Sheila Ghelani** was a spoken poem running through Sheila's sound installation *Rings Loops and Double Backs* - the second *Ramble in her Rambles with Nature* series. It emerged out of thoughts and encounters with fallen trees after the storm *St Jude* blew through the UK on October 28th 2013.

## PAGE 110-115

(1) *Air of the Anthropocene* is a collaboration between digital artist **Robin Price** and environmental scientist **Prof. Francis Pope**. The work visualises the amount of hazardous fine particulate matter (PM2.5) present in the air through experimental photography. Using a custom built digital light painter and wearable particulate sensor, Robin takes long exposure photographs that paint the amount of PM2.5 particles in the air as particles of light. As the light painter's sensor detects more pollution it draws in correspondingly greater numbers of light particles into the photograph. The effect is as if the microscopic pollution has been enlarged and lit up, shedding light on the invisible.

## PAGE 128-131

(1) **Zakiya McKenzie** is a PhD candidate with the Caribbean Literary Heritage project at the University of Exeter researching Black British journalism in the post-war period. In 2019 she was one of the first ever writers-in-residence for Forestry England during its centenary year. Her 2018 master's degree looked at the

environmental and social implications of petroleum 'discovery' offshore the Caribbean country of Guyana. In Bristol, McKenzie is on the steering group for the Black and Green project. Her work has featured at the Cabot Institute for the Environment at the University of Bristol, the Institute for Modern Languages Research at the University of London and on on BBC radio programmes *Woman's Hour* and *Farming Today*. Her monograph titled *Testimonies on the History of Jamaica* is coming later in 2021, published by Rough Trade Books.

(1) **Amy Balderston** is an illustrator and homeware designer based in Otley, Yorkshire.

## PAGE 140-141

(1) *First There is a Mountain* (2019) was a participatory artwork by **Katie Paterson** which invited participants to sculpt beaches into mountains of sand to form micro-geologies, using a series of 'buckets and spades' made in the form of world mountains: Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mount Shasta (N.America), Mount Fuji (Asia), Stromboli (Europe) and Uluru (Oceania). The artwork toured 25 UK venues over British Summer Time 2019

*First There is a Mountain* is supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland and Arts Council England.

## PAGE 158-161

(1) *Future Library* by **Katie Paterson** is commissioned and produced by Bjørvika Utvikling, managed by the Future Library Trust. Supported by the City of Oslo, Agency for Cultural Affairs and Agency for Urban Environment.

## PAGE 226-229

(4) *A Final Thought* by **Sheila Ghelani** was written for her *Rambles with Nature* pocket book - a print based *Ramble* documenting the project and published in 2015.



Invisible Flock Studio.

**Diversity Creates**

[www.ASEF.org](http://www.ASEF.org)