

An aerial photograph of a dense forest. The trees are mostly green, with some bare branches visible. A person wearing a green shirt and dark pants is standing in the center of the frame, looking up at the camera. The forest floor is covered in low-lying vegetation and fallen branches.

IMAG :: issue 13

CLIMATE LITERACY FOR ART EDUCATORS

IMAG::
INSEA

-
Editorial

“I am just one person, how can my literacy make any difference in a climate crisis which is so complex, overwhelming, and global?” “Do I want to change my habits and comfort for something that won’t make a difference in my lifetime?” “How can art possibly change my own and other perspectives on environmental stewardship?” These are honest questions for art educators. The principal co-editors and graphic designer of IMAG recognize that transforming knowledge and awareness of our environmental challenge into pedagogy that sustains the integrity of the arts, actively addresses climate literacy, while meeting academic standards is challenging and intimidating. Nonetheless, we believe that art educators have and will continue to inspire students and community members to address our critical environmental and social challenges.

Climate Literacy through Art was sparked by our conviction that as a global society we need to turn ideas into action as we encounter global warming. Our image of Climate Literacy is one that bridges knowledge, communication, and sense-making of the natural world with the arts and the creative process.

As we reflect on the enclosed five visual essays and our own experience we offer the following thoughts, highlighting four characteristics on how art educators create learning environments that lead to climate literacy: Bringing out the Wonder, Encouraging Empathic Relationships, Cultivating Voice, and Engaging Holistically.



A child as a part of nature (Photo: Sato, M.)

Bringing out the Wonder helps us transcend from what we know about our environment crisis to new perspectives and new possibilities. As students and community members unleash their imagination, engage in the creative process, cultivate composition, witness growth over time, and expand knowledge of interrelationships they have the opportunity to connect their artistic exploration to nature’s composition, growth, and interrelationships. The literacy of alignment, balance, juxtapositions, and spatial depth may awaken the aesthetic perspective when envisioning the interdependence of the ecosystem. These



Exploring Minimal Human Space / Performance Series
at ELTE TÓK #3612+VisualSkillsLab Lecturers:
Judit Skaliczki, Gabriella Pataky, Viola Rekvényi
September 2021
Photo: Gabriella Pataky

visual essays offer us insight on climate literacy by modeling how to break down routines, take risks, and open up to new ways of seeing. Restoring the land by *Becoming bird* and “maneuvering through challenges” to spark youth’s curiosity in *Where to from here* exemplify the power of exploring new climate perspectives through art. To become literate of nature’s wilderness and to become literate in the wilderness of artistic inquiry share pathways through observation, wonder, and encountering. When our sense of wonder is stretched, time is responsive to absorption; we become more aware of how we self-perceive in the world and how we perceive ourselves in relation to others and the world in which we live.

When art educators Encourage Empathic Relationships, they communicate the importance of engaging sensibly. The respect for materials, the keen dedication to aesthetics, and the appreciation of and learning from another’s work all suggest a high level of care in the creative process. Stewardship for the land requires an empathic sense of honoring “other.” The stories shared in *Contiguity, collaboration, and community*, *Where to from here*, and *What will suffice* demonstrate how collaboration extends knowledge and promotes a strong sense of care for others and place. When we practice

empathy within the creative process and develop authentic relationships within community we are more likely to envision ourselves as part of the ecosphere, accept the role of stewards, and assume responsibility for the footprints we leave. *Nomadic radical academy for the climate change awareness* encourages us to participate in less didactic and more collaborative and innovative learning settings that turn vulnerability and humility into the perception of and compassion for the well-being of the earth. Climate literacy through the arts becomes a lens to be present to the earth’s perspective. The creative process plants a seed to witness how the natural world replenishes itself through multidimensional and multigenerational wisdom.

Cultivating Voice through the arts encourages us to express authentically, empathically, and with wonder where words leave off. By connecting the making of art to our environmental challenge we encounter the complexity of what is beauty. By witnessing the interconnections of ecological and aesthetic issues and shifting observation from generalities and objectification to particulars and qualities young artists develop a palette to express observations. *What will suffice* and *Becoming bird* invite multigenerational community members a forum to visually communicate ideas in understanding the climate crisis. For the *Nomadic radical academy* the use of questions and responding to the interests of the group lead to visual storytelling. Enhancing our aesthetic perspective in reading the language of vision ideally provides a pathway to open ourselves to aesthetically attend to earth’s stories and our expressive voices to sustain its vitality.

Engaging Holistically suggests bringing mindfulness and a non-dualistic approach to problem solving and learning environments. When creating art in the context of the environment we stir the senses to envision the multidimensionality of beauty. *Becoming bird* and *Nomadic*

radical academy helps us envision how to overcome the stress of eco-anxiety, the fear of ambiguity, and being overwhelmed with climate crisis. Slowing down and reorienting time to be absorbed in the creative process are common features of the enclosed visual essays. These essays remind us that engaging in a project over time offers us a window into what indigenous people practiced for generations: the consequences of action today impact the future. A pedagogy that de-compartmentalizes learning and encourages a holistic approach to the complexity and interdependence of nature sets in motion an understanding of how the earth's resources and our everyday choices are inextricably linked to food insecurity, public health, energy, and social injustice. Climate Literacy through the arts ideally



Looking Out. This painting was inspired by looking out of a window admiring the grace and weave of a tree's limbs. Looking out is a metaphor for both the importance of observation and witnessing the aesthetic subtleties and interplay of nature as well as the looking out for, the caring and protection of nature. (Jonathan Silverman, Acrylic, Photo by Amira Silverman)

decolonizes a provincial view of nature; rather it nurtures a shift from an Anthropocene lens on the environment to one that honors and promotes a self-healing planet.

Whether generating a community response to the climate crisis by *Becoming bird* or *What will Suffice*, creating a contiguous space for four teachers to collaborate in *Contiguity, collaboration, and community*, creating a community voice on the climate crisis in *What will Suffice*, or *Nomadic radical academy's* engagement in artistic inquiry the art educators in this issue are thinking and acting differently. They model for us the courage and risk in finding ways to integrate art in response to environmental challenges.

As the world spins with conflict in Ukraine, forced migration, rampant fires, poverty, receding glaciers, and so on we need to actively embrace faith and a belief that as individuals and community members we can develop a literacy of knowledge, connections, communication, and resilience. Silence is not an option. Bringing out the wonder, encouraging empathic relationships, cultivating voice, and engaging holistically heightens our aesthetic perception to be attentive to the surrounding environment. When we are present in the world we can retrieve the awe that bridges humility and empathy with voice that empowers us to make a difference.

We hope that the visual essays in this issue and our reflections above contribute to the network of what is possible and spark ideas and confidence for art educators throughout the world.

Jonathan Silverman,
Co-Principal Editor,
on behalf of the Quartet

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BECOMING BIRD

Keywords: metamorphosis; participatory land art; swamp restoration; shift of perspective

Introduction

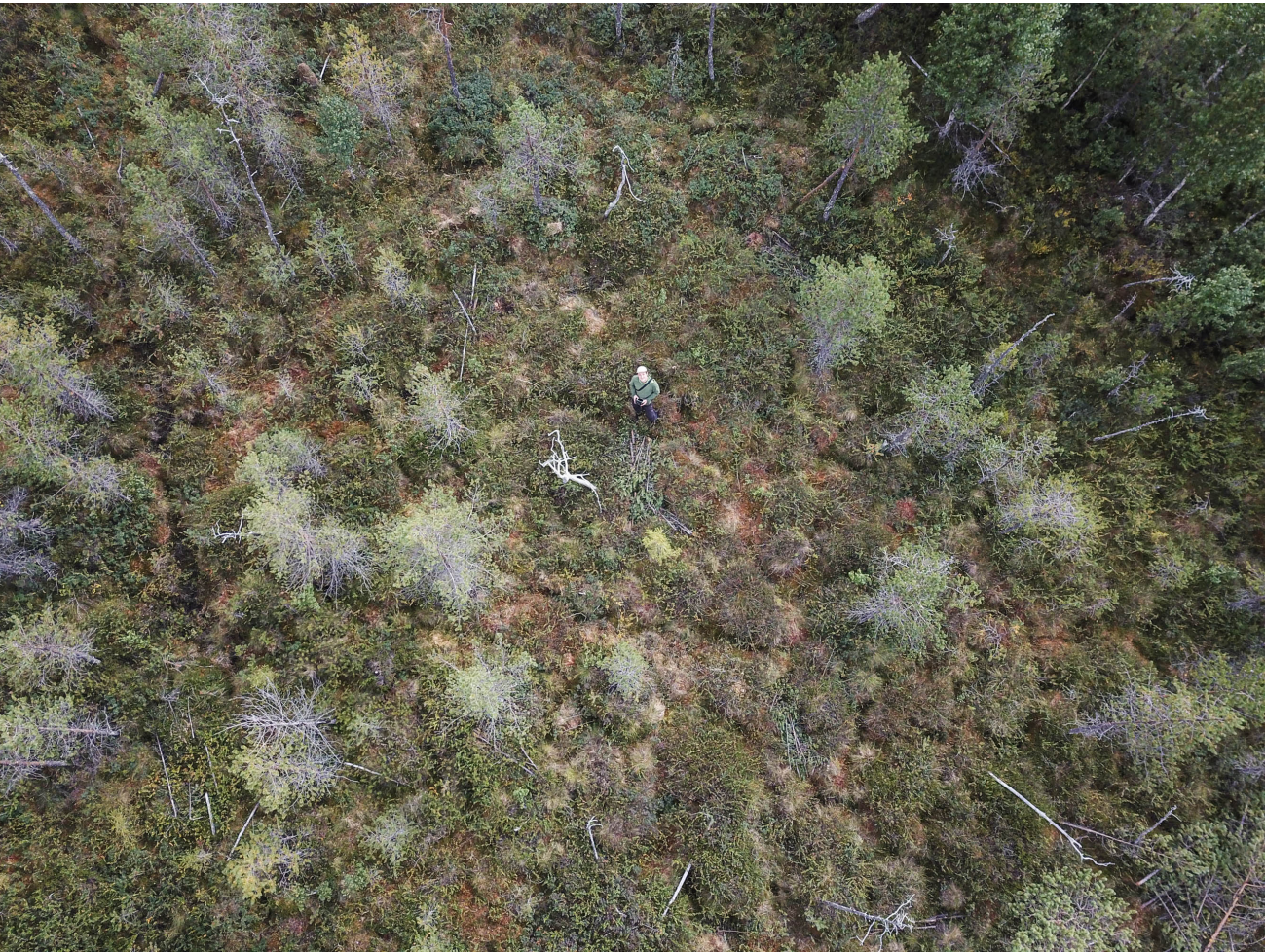
In October 2021, a participatory land art workshop was carried out on the shores of Lake Sierijärvi. The workshop was based on the Finnish national epic, Kalevala that tells about taking of a bird figure, such as Louhi's shapeshifting into an eagle and a dove and the metamorphosis of the daughter of the North into a log.



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Process

On the shores of Lake Sierijjärvi, where the oldest signs of human life have been found in the Rovaniemi region in Finland, there is an old small bog that has dried up as a result of human intentionally caused forest drainage. However, proper wood has not started to grow there. Now, the goal is to restore that area back into a swamp. Restoration involves the removal of excess wood.



Tactile and visual ways to make something concrete helps community members address environmental concerns, or what Pihkala (2020) calls eco-anxiety. He outlines that “emotions live in our bodyminds, and embodied activities are especially useful in encountering emotions. Various methods that use bodily movement, encounters in place, creative expression, and physical closeness to other beings can be very useful in exploring eco-anxiety and ecological emotions” (p. 23).

The outline of a bird character was sketched with tape usually used to keep the game (like deer) out of the roads. The drone images were used to check that it looked like what is being sought.



The trees removed during the land art workshop were chipped by a group and formed into a wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) shaped pattern. According to a conservation biologist experienced in restoration, wood sandpipers are one of the species that will particularly benefit from these swamp restoration activities.



The chips were transported with tarpaulins and garbage bags. The shades of the wood sandpiper's back were obtained from fallen birch leaves and the lightest parts from clear wood chips not including peak and limbs from the spines. The brightest birch trunks in the swamp were searched for the feet and beak.



Finally, the participants merged into a huge picture of a bird they had built together, became its feathers and soul, and for a moment were metamorphosed into a bird nesting on the shores of Lake Sierijärvi. The removed chips were facilitated in their composting process to the swamp again.



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Reflection

The process in this tactile workshop demonstrated an aesthetic encountering with the landscape. At the end of the workshop, we transformed into a wood sandpiper and thus welcomed the wood sandpipers back to the restored swamp. We made them an invitation to land for nesting, seen from a bird's eye view. At the same time, the workshop made the participants realize how only a few hours of work can generate a visible change (large enough to be seen from a satellite) when we work together and find ourselves looking at it from another, even surprising, perspective.

The workshop aimed to give one example of Pihkala's (2020) quest for embodied, collective and place-based methods and participatory action research into eco-anxiety. It demonstrated that alone our act might seem indifferent, but together we are powerful. It demonstrated that wicked problems can be dealt in a playful and effective way.

This was a concept experimentation of art-based services based on forest ecosystem services in cooperation with a local entrepreneur providing tourism and welfare services. The concrete result was the improvement of the forest environment and as well as the discovery that this workshop was for the work community's well-being and could be useful in many forms of education as well as tourist services.

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WHERE TO FROM HERE: BECOMING CLIMATE CURIOUS WITH A/R/TOGRAPHY

Keywords: a/r/tography, encounter, climate curious



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This visual essay traverses ways of knowing, doing, being and becoming together. In juxtaposing sharp and ambiguous detail with shadow and light spaces between figure and place, we can sit in and with the slippage between uncertainty and clarity. Achieving 'slipperiness' (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1988) is contingent upon our ability to adopt dynamic mindsets and practices that can anticipate shifting agendas for people and place. It is here at this flight/fight threshold that this visual essay elicits narratives that permeate the 'where to from here' of individual and collective navigations of climate curiosity.

Where to from here (MacDonald, 2021) comprised seven large oil paintings exhibited at the Cradle Mountain Wilderness Gallery in Tasmania, Australia from September 25th, 2021 – January 14th 2022. 'Where to' questions permeate my own becoming curious in and through creative practice in place. This Arts-Based Education Research emerges from the convergence of my lived experience and perspective as a climate curious artist, teacher and parent.

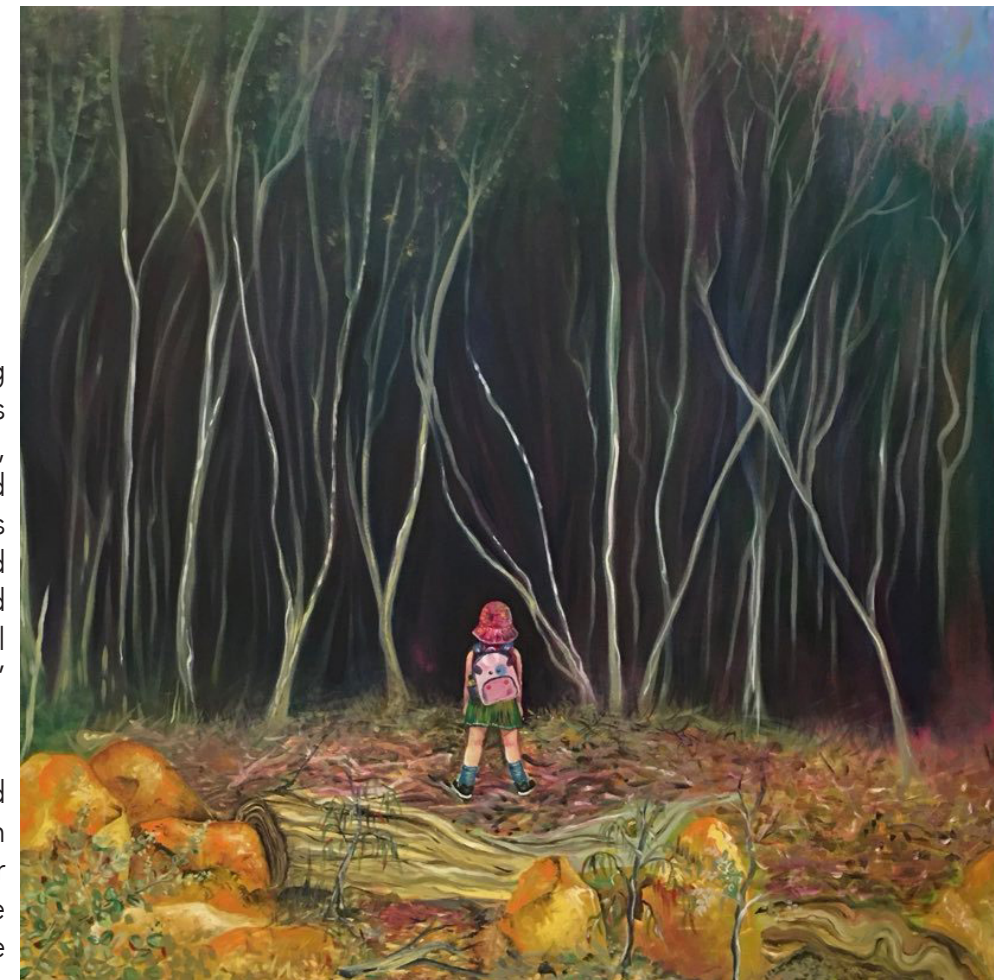


Fig. 1.
Where to from here (Silver Plains), Abbey MacDonald,
120 x 120 cms, oil on canvas

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What do we know? It's complicated

Teachers and students alike have shown resilience, ingenuity and adaptability in relation and response to the increasing volatility of COVID-normal times (Wise, et al., 2022). They are managing to do this amidst global uncertainty caused by a changing climate (Cole & Somerville, 2017; Nairn, 2019), reprioritizations in funding (UNESCO, 2020), and the COVID19 pandemic (Selkrig, Coleman & MacDonald, 2020). Each of these exacerbate perennial educational problems in Australia, such as digital divide and educational inequality (Ng & Renshaw, 2020).

The ebb and flow of children being actively engaged in and with climate discourse slips between people and place-centered ideologies. Youth is slippery in its encompassing and emergence from the space between child becoming adult (Rousell, 2020). It is in this formative slippage space that cultures of fear and risk aversion can impact upon young people's sense of belonging outside (Nairn, 2019).

Equipping young people with tools for becoming curious about climate must actively engage young people in and with tensions between peril, possibility, and hope (Wise et al., 2022). Such experiences can cultivate essential agency in teachers and young people for making and shaping meaning from environmental aesthetics (Sachs, 2017). It is through slippery strategizing that we can identify and foster the necessary skills for maneuvering through challenges associated with change and climate anxiety.



Fig. 2.
Where to from here (North Esk), Abbey MacDonald,
120 x 80 cms, oil on canvas

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Becoming climate curious in relation to COVID

COVID-precarity of March 2020 through to December 2021 saw a non-porous border contain the Australian island state of Tasmania. This created some freedoms for locals to wander, wonder, and reimagine our relationships with each other and connections to place. Place-based industry and closed-circuit economies encouraged our becoming in and through exploratory engagement and encounters with diverse environments. In this time, we experienced be/coming to terms with living in relation to lingering threat and making calm in the space between anticipation and uncertainty.



Fig. 3.
Where to from here (Hollybank),
Abbey MacDonald,
100 x 100 cms, oil on canvas

Child/adult-lead/follow encounters capture ecological interplay and a tension between people and place, yielding a significant in-between space for becoming climate curious. In slipping between playful, place-based encounters with the natural environment, thresholds of precarity and possibility alight in moments of becoming ecological (Rousell, 2020). Where to from here captures a practice and process of co-inquiry behind and beside the figure in place.

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Process and products

By looking into an apparent displacement that changes our point of view, I seek to capture the slipperiness of artist/researcher/teacher meaning making. This process of 'becoming ecological' yields an assemblage of people, place, practice and process, enabling a messy and fluid ecological network of meaning and making to unfold.

Parallel to these encounters, critical reflection and reflexive practice (Brookfield, 1995) sharpens attunement to the ways biases, perceptions, and assumption permeate attitudes towards people and place. This form of prompted self-reflection encourages and enables the re-imagining of ourselves and the environments we are intrinsically part thereof.

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Reflections

Although the arts engage widely with environmental themes, they do not necessarily - in and of themselves - facilitate the systematic attitudinal and behavioral changes for fostering conservation values (Badham, Wise, & MacDonald, 2021). Rather, this process requires an active meaning making space between person and place for brokerage and becoming.



Fig. 4.
Where to from here (Sisters Beach), Abbey MacDonald,
120 x 120 cms, oil on canvas



Fig. 5.
Where to from here (Wesley Vale), Abbey MacDonald,
120 x 120 cms, oil on canvas

As a parent, painter, and educator exploring place with my children, I am cognizant of inadvertently – and deliberately – curating a particular experience with specific messages and intended outcomes. Curating, meaning the philosophies and techniques for framing aesthetic experiences, emerges as key for influencing what one notices, and the meanings ascribed to these experiences.

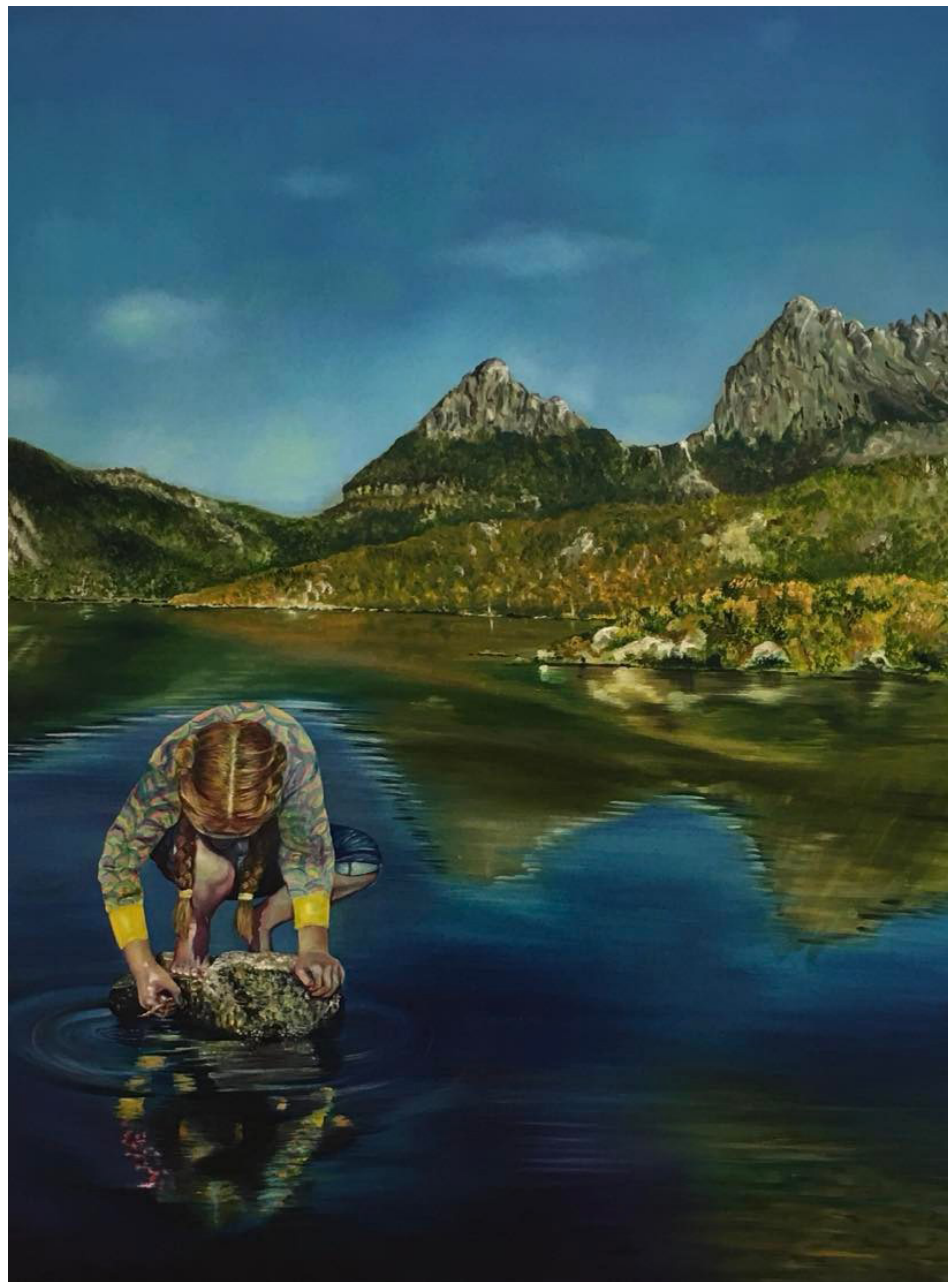


Fig. 6.

Where to from here (Cradle Mountain), Abbey MacDonald,
120 x 120 cms, oil on canvas

While curation is typically associated with galleries and museums, the practice can be extended and applied to 'other' fields and contexts, such as festivals, curricula and the environment. Scholarship of curatorial practice indicates a widening of didactic, "expert" presentation to the creation of active spaces of participant dialogue and interaction.

These assemblage-oriented curatorial approaches adopt a 'becoming ecological' mindset. These can help unearth myriad ways to understand and interact with and ultimately value the environment. The girls hold their own space in place; they too grapple with their own questions of *where to from here*.

Imagine what the girls see, think and feel in the meaning that can be made in this space. The positioning of detail, elements and objects seeks to invite you in. You are asked to identify closely with the encounter presented. The physical space between painting and viewer is a *where to from here* threshold for becoming in safe distance; keeping you at bay, out of their way.

You are welcome to wander with them, trusting their vision and paying attention to their demonstrated sense of curiosity as they find and make their own way. I wonder – what parallels mirror back to your own lived experiences of encountering place?

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Where to from here?

In response to global pandemics and catastrophic climate events, arts, culture and education institutions must begin to redefine existing boundaries and break with routine (Wise et al., 2022). Our ability and readiness to reckon with this is integral to how parents and educators equip themselves and young people for uncertain futures.

Where to from here seeks to capture and draw attention to a slipperiness between people and place. In recognizing how meaning making and depictions of environment are never inert, where to from here asks us to question how we engage, re-work, contest and become entangled with identities that are created and disputed in relation to place (Brigham, 2016).

Recognizing how we can become ecological in our approach where artists, curators and institutions work together to enable dialogic exchange extends the possibility and potential for connecting people and place.



Fig. 7.
Where to from here (Bridestowe), Abbey MacDonald,
110 x 67 cms, oil on canvas

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CONTIGUITY, COLLABORATION AND
COMMUNITY: BECOMING-LITERATE IN THE
INTRA-CONNECTED ECOLOGY OF THINGS; AS
PEOPLE IN PLACE THROUGH PRACTICE AND
PROCESS

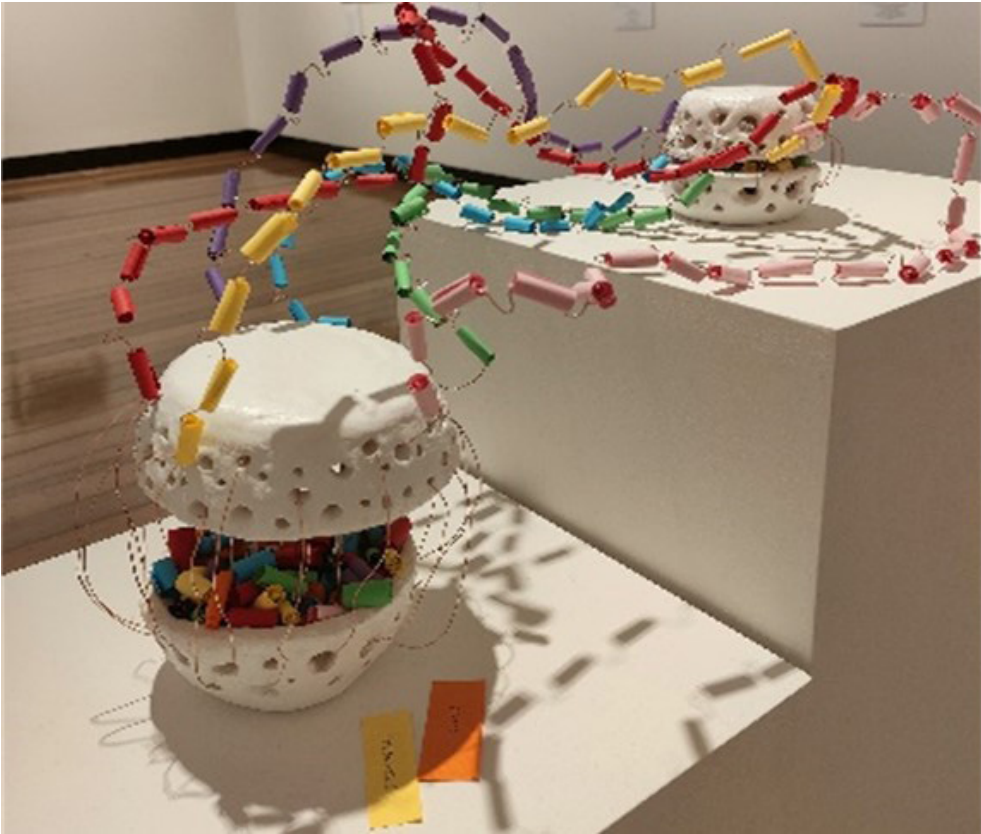
Keywords: contiguity, professional learning, community of practice, storytelling



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Introduction

This visual essay elicits insights from a teacher/researcher/artist exhibition held on the North-West Coast of Tasmania, Australia, in October 2021. In exploring what it means for teachers to make art together, *Contiguity: A sharing of stories* showcased a collaboration of four teacher-artist-storytellers. In attending to the contiguous nature of our approach to practice, we articulate how engagement in and with visual arts enable entangled intra-actions between teachers and place. As a professional learning process, the collaborators were becoming-literate in the intra-connectedness of students/teacher/materials/place. We have come to recognize the value of such experiences as essential for creating circumstances conducive for pedagogic reflection, growth and development in, through, and from art practice. By creating a contiguous space for making and responding teachers developed and embraced literacies that illuminate the entanglement of human and non-human beings.

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People, place and practice

The exhibition *Contiguity: A sharing of stories* was born out of Sarah Brooke’s PhD research. This arts-based educational research project investigated ways visual arts professional learning increases connection and understanding of the intra-connections between people, place, and practice. Specifically, we share and story the experience of Brooke’s collaboration with three teachers in contiguous making and responding. We work with Coleman’s (2017) adoption of contiguity, where our thinking, making and creating in, with, and through ideas saw us push boundaries of self and knowledge beyond the borders where the ideas lie adjacent to one another.

The teacher/collaborators chose to work in Brooke’s high school art room as this gave them a space that was set up for artmaking and access to art materials. We came to understand the agency of place in this collaboration (Barad, 2007). The space in which we made and responded to art provided opportunities for reflection on place and its connection to cultivating climate literacy. Our sense of place recognizes the interdependence of physical and human well-being where the intra-actions between human and nonhuman are deeply entangled. This visual essay posits and plays with the intra-action of teacher collaborative art making (MacDonald, Hunter, Ewing, & Polley, 2018) in place as a potent shaper of teachers’ own relational pedagogies and place-based literacies (Barton, 2018).



Fig. 2.
Collaborative weaving made by the four teacher/collaborators: a collection of materials taken from each collaborators place of teaching, collaboratively woven together to demonstrate the entanglement and agency of human and non human beings in their collaboration.

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Process and product

As a product, the *Contiguity: A sharing of stories* exhibition arose from a process of four teachers working in contiguous collaborative space, which provided manifold opportunities for organic meaning of making art to occur.



Fig. 3.
Artwork created by
primary teacher/
collaborator: the intra-
active process of parts
coming together in the
art making process in the
classroom, influenced
by access to available
materials and art media in
the classroom.

The process of collaborative art making and story sharing inspired a shift in pedagogical practice for how we might cultivate climate literacy in and through visual art making and responding. We discovered that contiguous understanding of issues around visual arts education could be collectively entangled, questioned, and explored providing openings for further learning and understanding. It is this process of organic meaning making through art making practices that entangled intra-activity in and for classroom teaching could occur. An acknowledgement of the agency of matter in meaning making within the visual arts can help to forge deeper connections with matter, with the non-human, and with our environment. It was in the intra-activity of our making and responding that we could imagine place/space for student learning parallels.

Engaging in and responding to place-based visual art making fostered diversified understanding of and appreciation for relationships between people and place (Rousell, 2020). The value of visual art making and responding became erudite, as did our appreciation of the potential for such experiences to inform how we might curate classroom encounters. Through the intra-activity of contiguous art making and responding teachers can create safe spaces for mistake making and curiosity to flourish. Our creative production of connection and difference in place enabled us to explore and embrace affective transitions in thinking, feeling, and being (Braidotti & Bignall, 2018). The intra-active approach to meaning making which considers both maker and materials to have agency in the art making process are the circumstances we feel are integral for developing diverse literacies in our classrooms. Climate literacies encompass an appreciation and acknowledgement of both the human and non-human.

At the nexus of making and responding, we engaged in conversation around how visual arts education could foster confidence and courage in developing literacies of place. In doing so, we found ourselves becoming pedagogical in, with and for the visual arts (Brooke, MacDonald, & Hunter, 2021). Collective conversation emerged from the nexus of our visual art making and responding, from which we came to articulate learnings, curiosities and questions pertaining to the relationality between artist, materials and the surrounding space/place which enable an artwork to come into being. Understanding this relationality between human and nonhuman can encourage climate literacies that entangle human and nonhuman more meaningfully.

The four collaborators worked together for ten weeks, equating to one school term in Tasmania, Australia. Meeting once a week for an hour in Brooke’s own high school art room, we created artworks with the available art materials, shared teacher stories, and responded to our experiences of teaching in and through art making. At the conclusion of collaborative art making, Brooke set to work rendering an aesthetic of and for this process. Imbued with her active engagement with and connective meaning made between process, product, place, and pedagogic philosophy, she created the culminating artwork.

This product as process a/r/tography renders an experience of teachers becoming pedagogically confident and competent through contiguous visual art making and responding. This painting speaks to the contiguous nature of being next to or touching another; of the fluid, blurring of boundaries that was this intra-active collaborative experience. Through the collaboration of both human and non-human beings, we can speculate fostering of place-based literacies via intra-action with/between environment, people and place (Ojala, 2012). We seek to capture/convey the ever-moving nature of beings, working alongside and in relation to each other.



Fig. 4.
Contiguity: an artwork created to render the blurring of boundaries and contiguous nature of this collaborative process of artmaking.

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Reflections

In and through contiguity, we developed skills, literacies and techniques for conveying artistic endeavor and creative intention. Our experiences were not separate, nor was our learning; we were interrelated, and through our contiguous collaborative venture we embraced ecological thinking: a community of teachers who engaged with and in visual arts, in and between place, together and with our students. This contiguous community learned, explored, and engaged through visual arts education concepts. In contiguity, we challenged and reimagined our ideas. In extending and expanding our own literacies, we recognized our communicative potential and responsibility to support the literacies of people and place in our classrooms. This visual essay maps and marks rhizomatic qualities of becoming-literate in better understanding the intra-connected ecology of things; as people in place through art practice.

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Fig. 5.
My happy place: after our collaborative venture, one teacher/collaborator engaged in a collaborative art making project with their students, each student explored their connection to a place they felt happy. This artwork became the pretext for further learning around the intra-connectedness between people, place and matter.



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WHAT WILL SUFFICE: ARTISTS RESPOND TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Keywords: community art show, climate crisis, artists response, workshops, Richmond Vermont



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Introduction: Our Climate, Our Responsibility

It was the fall of 2019 when Radiate Art Space and the Richmond Climate Action Committee put out a call to artists for a community art show to draw attention to the realities of the climate crisis. The goal was to have art express, communicate and illustrate feelings, emotions, concerns, and ideas. The vision was for an unjuried show, inviting artists of all ages and levels of experience to participate. Scheduled to open April 1, 2020, the curators had already collected the artwork and planned an open house for Earth Day. However, because of the pandemic, it would be a year and a half before the show would open. After some disappointment, sponsors saw this as an opportunity to allow more people to get involved and make more art.

What Will Suffice:

Artists Respond to the Climate Crisis



Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice. —Robert Frost

A Community Art Exhibit at the Richmond Free Library
September 1 - October 29, 2021 in Richmond, Vermont

Fig. 1. Poster announcing the community art exhibit. Monoprint by Judy Bush, *We Have Met the Enemy and It Is Us*, was inspired by Walt Kelly's Pogo comic strip especially created for Earth Day, 1971. The image was drawn from Francisco Goya's painting, *The Third of May 1808*.

To encourage and broaden community participation, Radiate Art Space offered a series of free workshops, beginning with “Get Active on the Issue of Climate Change” with Darcie Rankin. Inspired by the activism of Greta Thunberg and the Sunrise movement, these young artists expressed their passion about the climate crisis in their painted posters. One week later they took their message to the streets of Richmond, chanting “Climate change is real and it’s a big deal.”



Fig. 2. and 3.
Young artists expressed their passion about the climate crisis in their art, and one week later took their message to the streets of Richmond.

Cartoon Artist LJ Kopf led a workshop “Turning Your Ideas into Cartoons.” Matt Dransfield, a high school science teacher, attended this workshop and his cartoon became part of the exhibit.

Judy Bush led a group on printmaking. Participants made simple block prints and monoprints, with images of smoking factories, power lines, floods, forest fires, polar bears, and spark plugs!

Judy BUSH - *What Will Suffice: Artists Respond to the Climate Crisis*

In a six-week after-school session, “Love the eARTth,” children learned about the wonders of coral reefs and the effects of warming waters on these vital ecosystems. The clay figures the students created were displayed in a colorful diorama of a coral reef lit by blacklight. Participants in the “Advocate with Art” workshop, led by Raechel Barone, created collage postcards with messages to legislators and other policymakers. They were included as an interactive installation in the climate show: viewers were invited to take a card (postage included), sign it, and mail it to their representative.



Fig. 4.
Advocate With Art: An interactive installation created in a workshop led by Raechel Barone.

Starting at a stall at the local farmer’s market late in the summer, families worked together to paint an acrylic mural. The final piece, entitled, “Our Climate: Our Responsibility” was finished over a series of five more workshops with over 30 participants and still hangs on the outside of our library.



Fig. 5.,6. and 7.

Our Climate, Our Responsibility, 60" x 60" panels, murals painted by community members in a series of six workshops led by Rebecca Rouiller and Judy Bush.

Beyond the workshops, individual painters, weavers, photographers, printmakers, cartoonists, sculptors, and workers in clay, paper pulp, glass, felt, and mixed media all responded to the call. Artists were asked to include a short statement about the source of their inspiration that would connect their work to the theme of drawing attention to the climate crisis. This could be a book, a poem, a movie, a news article, a friend, or a personal experience; the result was an array of statements as diverse and engaging as the work itself.

Artists responded abstractly: marking the ripple effect our choices have on others and our environment or representing the melting ice caps.

They responded realistically: illustrating a barren landscape...



Fig. 8.

Open Water. Kiln-formed glass (8" x 10" panels) by Christy Witters. The beautiful and yet devastating images of the melting polar ice caps inspired this piece. "I love to represent water in glass. Just a little heat added slowly, over time, causes melting, flow, and permanent change."

or showing a beautiful sunset.



Fig. 9. *Above All Else*, alcohol ink on Yupo paper, 16" x 14", by Lynn Furno. "Look what we've done... as the sky is roiling above, the land lies devastated below... the electric line is the only thing left that rises up - no trees, no birds, no thriving ecosystems with plants and animals, no people - as if the most important thing were to keep the energy flowing, and now it is the only thing that remains." - a friend.

Artists responded analytically: graphically showing the exponential rise in greenhouse gas emissions or offering two different outcomes for the future dependent on the choices we make today. They responded emotionally: with anger at how the military budget overshadows all we as individuals can do to reduce global warming and with sadness at the loss of habitat and wildlife due to the recent forest fires.



Fig. 10.
Wind Power, watercolor, 16" x 12", by Deana Allgaier. Properly sited wind power is an important part of the strategy to combat climate change. Every megawatt-hour produced by wind energy avoids an average of 1,220 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions.



Fig. 11.
The Death of Trees and Birds - Pottery Urn, clay, sodium silicate and mica, raku fired, 9" height, by Fran Pomerantz. This piece was inspired by the loss of forest and canopy habitat for birds caused by fires this past summer.

Artists responded compassionately: for the birds - loons, penguins, herons, and ravens - as well as polar bears butterflies, sheep, and an orangutan. Visitors responded in a comment book: "Thank you artists! For leading the way with your creativity and expression," "Beauty and a call to action," "...inspired me to do more art and continue to be creative," and "a message well delivered."



Fig. 12.
Ed Oechsle's *The Least of My Brethren* (Oil 60" x 48") was one of the more popular works of art in the exhibit for visitors of all ages. Painted in response to the clear-cutting of the rainforest in Borneo and it's effect on our closest genetic relatives, the eyes of this giant orangutan followed you through the library, not letting you ignore their penetrating stare, seeming to ask you what are you going to do? What are you going to do about this crisis?

To our surprise the project did not end with the exhibit. Someone suggested a catalog or printed record of the artwork. Another individual stepped forward with a grant to get us started. Bill McKibben, a well-known American Environmentalist, generously accepted an invitation to write a foreword. Thus, with a great deal of volunteer labor, writing, photography, and graphic design our catalog was produced. Our goal continues to be to use the catalog to share our experience with as many other communities as possible. After distributing copies to participants, we sent them to politicians, climate activists, artists, arts organizations, libraries, schools, and teachers. The response has been rewarding. A local elementary school is excited to be using it as a supplementary text for their science studies. A climate activist who had just lived through a forest fire in her hometown responded that she found the catalog to be “inspiring and a wonderful surprise during a very challenging time.” Other art groups and communities have called and written to express interest in taking on similar projects.

We see this as just a beginning, an invitation to everyone to act and think and participate creatively in the most important conversation of our time. A warming world needs art because we need to imagine our lives differently, we need new ways of seeing, and we need ways to embody our grief. That artists are responding now to the climate crisis shows that it is no longer an abstraction, that it has moved from the background to the foreground of consciousness. Above all, artists personalize for us a topic that is so often framed in a language of detachment and expertise. This is *our* climate, they are saying. *Our* responsibility.

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NOMADIC RADICAL ACADEMY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS: SCIENCE COMMUNICATION THROUGH PERFORMANCE

Keywords: performance, performance pedagogy, climate change, art-based research, Lithuania



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- Introduction

This visual essay is themed around performance and performance pedagogy as the tools to communicate climate change to children and young people ages 5 to 14 years old. Sava (2015) discussed how science communication using performance reaches a wider audience. The present study focuses on how performance can communicate climate change information to children. The case project within this study was The Nomadic Radical Academy (2019 and 2020). The educational aspect of the project aimed at enhancing creativity and inner motivation of the children while gaining knowledge about climate change (Griniuk, 2021a). Through performance children were encouraged to discuss issues of respectful behavior towards the environment and nature. The project's aim was to explore how performance and participation can be tools for communicating science, particularly climate change, to children.

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Process

Two pilot projects titled The Nomadic Radical Academy took place in 2019 (See Figure 1) and 2020 (See Figure 3) at the Gallery Meno Parkas in Kaunas, Lithuania. They consisted of performances and participatory projects, facilitated by Nordic and Baltic artists, and were targeted to an audience of children and youth (Griniuk, 2021b). The children and youth participated in the project daily with a variable duration (4 hours duration daily in 2019 to 9,5 hours duration daily in 2020). The site of the performance was an installation, which in 2019 reassembled the scenography of a shanty town as an apocalyptic vision of Earth after irreversible climate change (See Figure 2). The artists were presented as the inhabitants of this shanty town inviting local children into sensory art-based education about how/why to be caring of nature and our surroundings. In 2020 the installation consisted of a partly artistic production by Griniuk based on the previous year's documentation, and partly built by the participating children. The creative process was continually unfolding as the projects developed and progressed over time. The young participants were targeted both individually and as a group; the group dynamic unfolded with each of the artist's contributions as well as self-organized activity in breaks between performative actions. This created a dialogical space recognized as a creative performance loop where exchanges happened within the space between the actions of the facilitating artists and the children (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). The performance space was constantly evolving and developing. The children produced items for or added to the installation, and were involved in the durational process of production, sometimes over several days.



Fig. 1.
Processual snapshots from The
Nomadic Radical Academy in
2019. Photos: Antanas Untidy.
Collage by Tue Brisson Mosich.



Fig. 2.
Shanty town aesthetics of
the Academy in 2019. Photos:
Antanas Untidy. Collage by
Tue Brisson Mosich.

The science communication happened in the following ways: in 2019 the artists' works, which made up part of the installation, were all themed around climate change. This installation was used as a speculative entry point into the theme, by which we encouraged the participants to reflect on situations in their own life. Thus, discussions began with unfolding the conceptual layers of the art works, and then diving into reflection-based conversation with children on themes such as climate adaptation in the cities, renewable energy, and sorting domestic waste. Instead of looking at educational videos or discussing data on climate change, the children became part of our performative interactions by creating costumes, toys, or other items from recycled materials. In this way the understanding of the theme of recycling was very "hands-on," and children were encouraged to understand the complex topics by the action of performing and making of art. One key observation is that this performing and making turned out to be processual in nature, rather than goal-oriented. Thus, the making of, for example, a doll was seemingly not undertaken due to a want of the produced item, but rather for the process of making it instead. This was evidenced by the amount of items that were produced but left behind by the makers.

The Nomadic Radical Academy action took place inside the site-specific installation at the gallery space. The facilitation was by the author of the project and by the invited artists, who stepped into the project with their actions and performances involving children. Materials were collected and bought in advance, so the actions were pre-planned on the basis of what scale and what activities were possible to include. But as the projects unfolded the facilitators responded to the children's interests and shaped the actions continually, based on their observations of the creative flow. The facilitators continually addressed what themes were of interest to the group, how in-depth it was possible to go with what themes, how long the children could concentrate on one activity, and how improvisation became a powerful tool for the artists within the project.

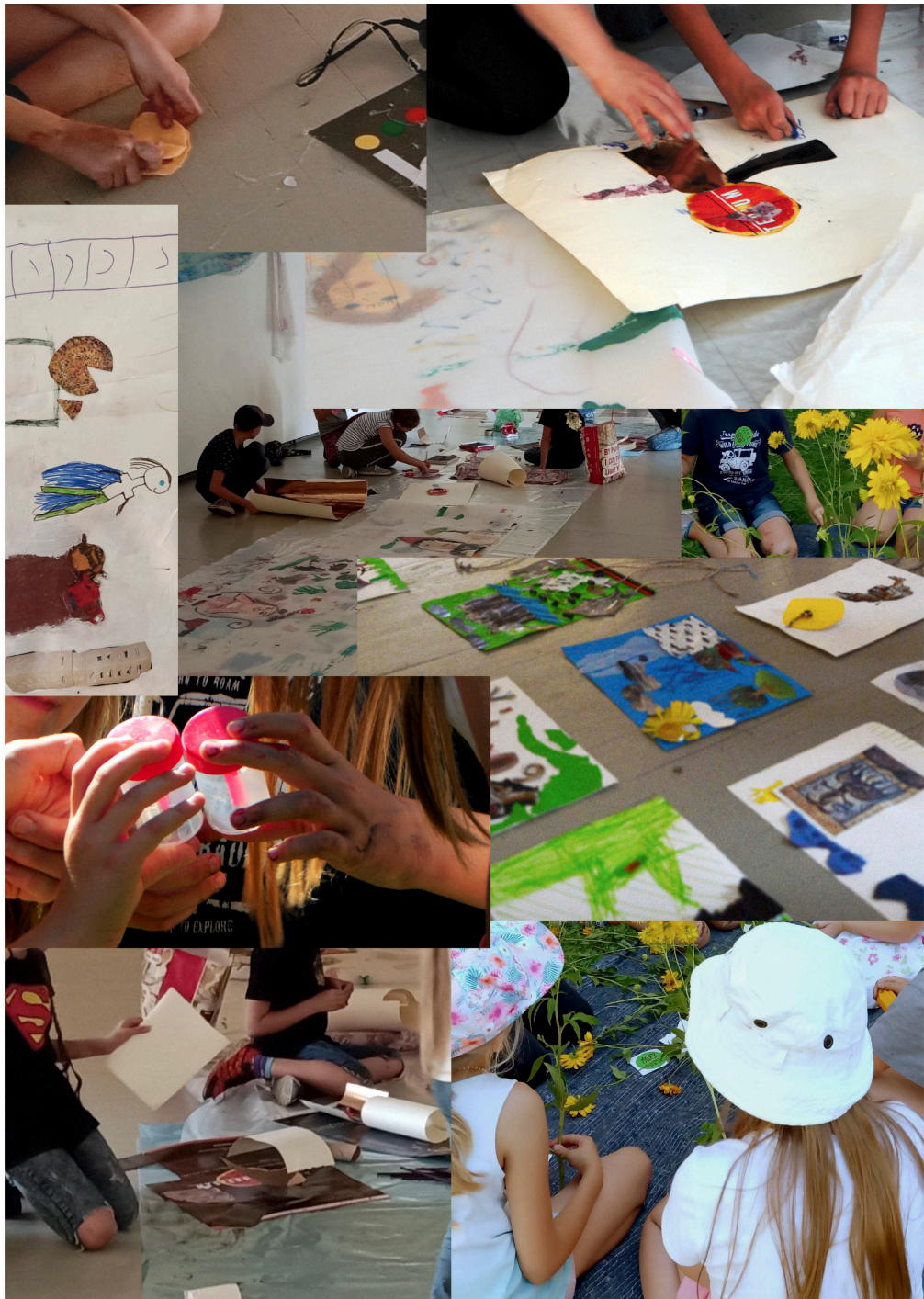


Fig. 3.
Performative actions
and processes in 2020.
Photos: Antanas Untidy
and Raminta Jodikaitytė.
Collage by Tue Brisson
Mosich.

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Reflection

The Nomadic Radical Academy showed how science communication through performance project for a young audience can unfold in collective and experiential events, as opposed to a traditional teacher-student dynamic. The learning encouraged improvisation by the facilitators as well as participants and everyone jointly shaping the flow and duration of the performances. Sensory and making-based approaches helped the children to go into a self-motivated flow of reflecting and discussing the questions of climate change and care for the environment and nature. We further argue that these approaches manifested in the realization of performative processes by the audience/children, thereby making performance a suitable framework for communicating complex issues to a young audience.

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An aerial photograph of a dense forest. The trees are mostly green, with some bare branches visible. A person wearing a green shirt and dark pants is standing in the center of the frame, looking up at the camera. The forest floor is covered with fallen branches and leaves.

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