



UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

**SUSTAINABILITY,
IMAGINATION AND
AESTHETICS**
WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

26-27 June 2024

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INTRODUCTION

How should literature, art, film and other creative media respond to the growing environmental crisis? How can they best assist the dual project of mitigating the threats we face and fashioning a more sustainable future? The poet William Blake proposes that before we can build such a future we must first imagine it. What is the nature and role of imagination and creativity in this context? What new imaginings do we need to inspire individuals, businesses and governments to take meaningful action against climate change and other environmental challenges? What work can be done in this regard by established artistic forms and literary genres, and where is there perhaps a need to develop more radically innovative, experimental forms and genres? And what lessons and potential strategies for communicating and promoting sustainability do creative engagements with this theme offer those working in other sectors such as education, conservation, heritage, science and technology? Can the arts and creative practices create democratic spaces for imagining sustainable futures and diversifying mainstream visions?

The 1 and a half day interdisciplinary workshop *Sustainability, Imagination and Aesthetics* (26-27 June 2024) will explore these issues, bringing together scholars, literary and artistic practitioners, filmmakers, activists and others so as to share insights and innovations and develop a pluralistic understanding of how literature, art and the creative sector more broadly might best speak to the environmental emergency.

Workshop Chairs:

Dr Anastasia Loukianov and Dr Carl Thompson (University of Surrey)

Organising committee:

***Sustainability, Imagination and Aesthetics* is organised by the Sustainability, Creativity and Communication research group within Surrey University's Institute for Sustainability**

Administrative support:

Louise Jones, Institute of Advanced Studies

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE

Innovation for Health Building, Room 02 IFH 01

(BST)

14.00 – 15.30

Session 1:

Introductory Remarks - Anastasia Loukianov and Carl Thompson (University of Surrey, UK)

Radicalizing Aesthetics of Complexity with Iridescence - Sacha Kagan (University of Hildesheim and Leuphana University, Germany)

Aesthetic Choice and Value Change in Sustainability Transformations - Sanna Lehtinen (Aalto University and University of Helsinki, Finland)

15.30 – 16.00

Refreshments

16.00 – 17.30

Session 2: On Placemaking

Making Sense Through Stories: Participatory Narratives as a Pathway to Local Resilience [VIRTUAL] - James T. Jones (University of Waterloo, Canada)

Jerusalem Among the Satanic Mills: Re-Enchanting Built Environments Through Oral Storytelling - Jon Mason (University of Brighton, UK)

The Environmental Illusionists - Chris Medland (University of Surrey, UK)

17.30 – 18.30

Drinks Reception

18.30 – 20.30

Dinner at the Lakeside Restaurant

DAY 2 – THURSDAY 27 JUNE

Innovation for Health Building, Room 02 IFH 01

(BST)

09.00 – 10.30

Session 3: Education and Policy

Sustainability, Teaching and Hope: Integrating the Arts and Performance in Higher Education and Business Schools to Imagine and Explore Sustainable Futures - Mary Ann Kernan (City, University of London, UK)

Imagining Lasting Sustainability: An Educational Programme - Tiziana Tamborrini (GAIALUX, Luxembourg)

Using Art to Understand and Visualise Environments for Optimal Experience - Megan Cumming (Swansea University, UK)

Dancing Across Differences: Exploring Interdisciplinarity Through Creative Methods - Rebecca Edgerley (University of Exeter, UK)

10.30 – 11.00

Refreshments

11.00 – 11.50

Session 4: Artists and Activists I

Choreographing for Sustainability - Hannah Woodliffe and Tilly Maginnis (H and T Creative, UK)

Everything You Wanted to Know About Solarpunk But Were Too Afraid to Ask [VIRTUAL] - Alex Holland (SolarPunk Stories, UK)

11.50 – 12.00

Break

12.00 – 12.45

Session 5: Artists and Activists II

Creating A Better Future Through Artistic and Activist Processes - Trish Kiy (XR Dorking, Reigate and Redhill, UK)

12.45 – 13.45

Lunch

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13.45 – 15.15

Session 6

The Poetics of Making Place - Mark Sim (Schumacher College, UK)

Aristophanes Reloaded: The Afterlife of Birds in Comic Book Format and the Question of Eco-Hubris - Dimitris Asimakoulas (University of Surrey, UK)

Gifts From the Sentient Forest: Botanical Imagination and People-Tree Relations in Northern Finland - John Charles Ryan (Southern Cross University, Australia) & Francis Joy (University of Lapland, Finland)

15.15 – 15.30

Refreshments

15.00 – 17.00

Session 7

Demon Reckoning: Unmasking Anthropocentrism for a Sustainable Future - Kethaki Wijesinghe (University of Brighton, UK)

Biopolymer Aesthetics: Recent Practices in Aotearoa [VIRTUAL] - Raewyn Martyn (Ilam School of Fine Arts, New Zealand)

'Pure Waste': Playing, Hacking, and Jamming Production - Chloe Germaine and Paul Wake (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK)

INVITED SPEAKERS

Dr Chloe Germaine



Dr Chloe Germaine is a Reader in English Literature at Manchester Metropolitan University and also Co-Director of the Manchester Metropolitan Games Centre. Her research brings together Literary Studies and Games Studies to explore how culture, creativity and play can help us tackle climate change and other social issues. In particular, she is interested in developing new approaches to address the imaginative challenge presented by the environmental crisis and by attendant feelings of powerlessness among marginalised groups. As well as publishing extensively as an academic, she is also a creative in the indie game design space, who seeks in this way to bridge the gap between academia and the creative industries.

Dr Sacha Kagan



Dr Sacha Kagan is a transdisciplinary researcher in the arts and cultures of sustainability. His main research and action areas are the transdisciplinary field of "arts and (un-)sustainability", and more recently, the transformative processes of "queering". Some of his key interests include: the sociology of arts and culture, cultural economics, arts management, dance studies, documentary film, arts-based research, queer studies, sexual cultures, urban research, the epistemology of transdisciplinarity, sustainability research, sustainable development, and cultures of/cultural sustainability. He is former Coordinator of Research Network 2: Sociology of the Arts, at the European Sociological Association (ESA) for the period 2015-2017 ; and a former member of the ESA RN2 Board from 2011 to 2019. Sacha has authored over 70 publications (books, book chapters, scientific journals articles, etc.) and co-developed artistic interventions in various temporary collectives.

Dr Sanna Lehtinen



Dr Sanna Lehtinen is a Senior Lecturer at the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (AaltoARTS) as well as a Docent in Aesthetics at the University of Helsinki. Her professional interests include urban/environmental/everyday aesthetics, philosophy of technology, and contemporary forms of environmental and urban art. She is Codirector in the board of the international Philosophy of the City Research Group (PotC). She has served as the President of the Finnish Society for Aesthetics and a Delegate in the Executive Committee of the International Association of Aesthetics (IAA) in 2019–2021. I have also experience of working in projects outside the Academia, in consultancy roles in prestigious urban/property development projects in downtown Helsinki. Sanna has a PhD (2015) in Aesthetics from University of Helsinki and was a recipient of the Young Scholar Award by International Association for Aesthetics (IAA) in 2013. Before launching her academic career, she worked for as a curator of contemporary art at the Amos Anderson Art Museum (Amos Rex since 2018).

Dr Paul Wake



Dr Paul Wake is a Reader in English Literature at Manchester Metropolitan University and also Co-Director of the Manchester Metropolitan Games Centre. His research interests include games (analogue and digital), narrative theory and historiography; he has also worked extensively on the British novelist Anthony Burgess.

ABSTRACTS

WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE

Radicalizing Aesthetics of Complexity with Iridescence?

Sacha Kagan, Leuphana and Hildesheim University, Germany

My talk will start with a brief overview of my previous work on two topics directly addressed by the workshop:

- the notion of “aesthetics of complexity” (Kagan 2011), which roots itself in Edgar Morin’s “generalized complexity”, Gregory Bateson’s aesthetics and Basarab Nicolescu’s “theoretical transdisciplinarity”, and which I had deployed in the context of a discussion of the movement of “ecological artists”;
- and the differentiated consideration of both “imagination” and “imaginaries” of sustainability in the societal search process known as procedural sustainability (Kagan 2019).

I will then focus on the consequences of delving deeper into “generalized complexity”. What may a “radicalization of complexity” imply, in artistic practice? Within this interrogation on a mobilization of the imagination and on efforts to reorient social imaginaries towards radical complexity, I will focus on a specific kind of “imaginal” potential, with the notion of “iridescence”. I will thus first briefly introduce the notion of iridescence as it has been deployed at the crossroads of Queer Studies and Museum Studies (see Sullivan and Middleton 2020), to then interrogate this notion of iridescence in the light of the challenge of generalized complexity – as a

challenge to affect social imaginaries through the mobilization of the imagination and of the imaginal.

Would a focus on iridescence hold fruitful potential for a radicalization of the aesthetics of complexity? What can iridescence bring us for a radical complexity in engaged artistic practices? Could it contribute to an imaginal rooting of complexity and offer a chance to dig into the roots of social imaginaries?

Aesthetic Choice and Value Change in Sustainability Transformations

Sanna Lehtinen, Aalto University and University of Helsinki, Finland

In the philosophical and applied aesthetics literature as well as in sustainability science and studies, the role of aesthetic choice and values in sustainability transformations is becoming increasingly recognized and acknowledged. In order to better understand the human meaning-making processes deeply embedded in consumption habits, for example, a broadened perspective on aesthetic value is needed than what has been on offer so far in the field of philosophy of art. Diverging from a long tradition of understanding aesthetics as a realm of disinterested attention to beauty and other positive aesthetic qualities, everyday aesthetics and subsequent developments in the aesthetics of care, for example, show that aesthetic value is most often enmeshed with other human values in complex ways. In this talk, I outline a framework for studying the concept of aesthetic choice as an integral part of aesthetic sustainability and, as one

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possible direction for applying it into practice, show its implications for facilitating the adoption of more sustainable consumption habits.

Making Sense Through Stories: Participatory Narratives as a Pathway to Local Resilience [VIRTUAL]

James T. Jones, University of Waterloo, Canada

Human activity in the last 200 years has created a metacrisis with globally significant impacts on climate, biodiversity, social equity, and justice. Sustainable development faces criticism that goals will not be met through continued growth amid the social complexity that underpins the current crises. Novel approaches shift the search for solutions to the problematic way we perceive and act within the world, including re-evaluating narratives which shape our interactions.

Narratives are commonly framed as nouns (e.g., the sustainability narrative) but are also a process of continuous 'coming into being of phenomena' into patterns of meaning that shape human behaviour, as part of the 'sensemaking' that precedes action. Narrative approaches are a way of understanding and acting in complexity, however they are not normative by design, so the oft-heard call for the 'need for new narratives' imposes conditions on the narrative process that challenges theories of non-linearity and uncertainty.

Our narratives have evolved primarily through interaction at the local scale with the completion of physical tasks in community, such as hunting, toolmaking, or child-care in place (the view from Somewhere). Modernity yields narratives of the highly mobile individual, structuring

narratives without limits in virtual realms (the view from Anywhere/Nowhere).

My research explores the re-localisation of narrative sensemaking as a regenerative approach to the metacrisis and to understand the role narratives play as a facilitator or barrier to change, including understanding relationships at different scales, their role in revealing "the adjacent possible" and in creating affordances for alternative futures.

Jerusalem Among the Satanic Mills: Re-Enchanting Built Environments Through Oral Storytelling

Jon Norman Mason, University of Brighton, UK

Ecological concerns are often expressed in the work of oral storytellers (eg Schneidau 2021, The Storytelling Choir 2022). Echoing Weber (1922), performers/academics argue that in pre-modern psychology, the physical environment was interpreted through stories, making it inherently meaningful or "enchanted" and deserving of care (Nanson 2021, Lupton 2023); oral storytelling is seen as ideally placed to reinvigorate that imaginative, enchanted connection, through its non-technological performance and its provenance in pre-industrial traditions. However, while parallel scholarship in cultural geography, anthropology and oral history emphasises that imagination and meaning-making have continued in our relationships with (post-)industrial environments (Cosgrove 1988, Ryden 1993, Summerfield 2004), the resulting "urban legends" and other modern myths of place are underrepresented in contemporary UK storytelling. In this presentation, storyteller and doctoral researcher Jon Norman Mason argues the

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need to bridge that gap, engaging with modern stories of place so that built environments are "re-enchanting" as directly as green ones, and thus recognised as being as worthy of social and environmental attention. He reflects on his own attempts as a storyteller to dispel the familiar (sub)urban malaise that 'nothing ever happens here' - developing new tropes, poetics and material to give drama and magic to the experience of modern space. Further, he celebrates pioneering works by other storytellers, assessing how they successfully evoke enchantment (and overt conservationism) through modern patterns of life and environmental realities eg *Binderella* (The Ragged Storytelling Collective, 2021), *Nexus* (Carl Gough, 2023), *It Came From The Internet* (Amelia Armande, Jason Buck and Aaron Oliver, 2023).

The Environmental Illusionists

Chris Medland, University of Surrey, UK

The greatest challenge facing humanity today is our speedy shift towards a sustainable and resilient society that minimises our contribution and adapts our environs to the effects of climate change. What does that future look like? The use of imagery to engage the public with sustainability issues is vital. Architects use imagery to sell a vision of the future, but are they all honest visions based on how things really work, what they are built of and how they can be powered?

There are examples of images of 'sustainable buildings' or design concepts on social media that are no more than skin-deep green mirages utilised to promote projects or their designers and fail the simplest of sustainability tests at first principles. World renowned designers are

as guilty of this green fraud as up and coming social media attention seekers. Is there a danger that public perception of sustainability is skewed by the number of follows, likes, and shares?

There is a tension between expectations and reality created by the attention grabbing faux green imaginings of the fraudsters and the more humble, subtle, sustainable designs. Buildings that suit the Instagram narrative of sustainability – huge areas of glazing, each home as an earth ship, and skyscrapers covered in 150-year-old perfectly pruned gravity and wind defying rootless trees – is a diversion from the route to a sustainable future on this planet. The longer this hijacking of the visual narrative of sustainability goes unchecked the further off course society will be.

THURSDAY 27 JUNE

Sustainability, Teaching and Hope: Integrating the Arts and Performance in Higher Education and Business Schools to Imagine and Explore Sustainable Futures

Mary Anne Kernan, City, University of London, UK

This paper outlines and critiques my experience of teaching sustainability at the Bayes Business School in 2023 and 2024 as part of a module called Creativity and the Creative Industries in the interdisciplinary Masters in Innovation, Creativity and Innovation (MICI). In 2023, I added a sustainability theme to the assessment criteria of a group performance assessment (40% of a 15-credit module). I reflect on my use of applied and process drama to inspire hope, 'cathedral thinking' and action in the face of climate change (Boal, 2008;

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Österlind, 2018; Wall et al., 2025), consistent with the MICL's commitment to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2023).

In this practice, I encountered student resistance both to active engagement with the arts and to the complex, emotive and value-laden implications of climate change, consistent with Stoknes' definition of the 'psychological climate paradox' (2014) and Ojala's analysis of how negative emotions impede climate action (Ojala, 2012). I discuss the interdisciplinary context, including programme values and assessment, which encourage the MICL students to engage with the narrative power of the arts (Caracciolo, 2021) and the 'radical imagination' needed to sustain our hope and 'imagine the world, social institutions and human relationships otherwise' (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2010, p.3).

I conclude by outlining the CLEHES model for 'enactive' learning developed by García De La Cerda (García De La Cerda et al., 2022) which emphasises the roles of embodiment and affect, one of the analytical models which I share with my students to underpin our shared explorations of the power of the arts to address sustainability as humanity's ultimate VUCA challenge (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous).

Imagining Lasting Sustainability: An Educational Programme

Tiziana Tamborrini, GAIALUX, Luxembourg

The IDEE project by Gaialux, "Imaginez la Durabilité Ecosocial Ensemble", began its journey on September 2023. Together with many artists, art teachers, and students from various high schools, Gaialux,

partnered by passionate associations and funders, has embarked in a beautiful adventure of illustrating and promoting the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Artistic creation – figurative arts, together with poetry and storytelling - will be a joint production of artists and students, while touring through schools and public spaces.

Core of the project is the fusion of scientific and artistic content, with active participation from students alongside professional artists (17 artists – 5 schools – around 50 students). As many authors suggest, the current impasse in addressing the ecological transition highlights the urgent need for a significant shift in our analytical paradigms. We need other visions. The language of Art can help cultivate qualities such as empathy, sense of responsibility, critical thinking, imagination, values based on relationships with others, on being a community, on the importance of 'care' over competitiveness, especially among younger generations who will be the political class and citizens of tomorrow. Where politics is stuck and silent, arts can light up actions and behaviours talking to emotions.

Why the Agenda 2030? Because it offers indispensable multidimensional lens for the current climate challenge, which call for a systemic rethink of our societal model to embrace the biosphere as essential parameter. Human society must realign itself within the circularity of life. Indulging with an outdated anthropocentric approach offers no viable future. Art can play a key role in envisioning change, and motivating new behaviours.

Using Art to Understand and Visualise Environments for Optimal Experience

Megan Cumming, Swansea University, UK, with Amy Isham, Merryn Thomas, Ed Lord, and Maggie Miller

Understanding environments for flow has the potential to reshape the places in which we live, play and work for the betterment of human wellbeing and sustainability. Flow is the optimal experience of immersion in an activity often associated with human flourishing. Self-reported locations of flow provide limited insight into the physical features present. Therefore, this exploratory research takes a creative approach to test the use of participant-generated artwork in deriving a fuller understanding of environments for flow, while creating a means of public engagement with science.

Two workshops took place in February 2024, each lasting two hours. 27 Swansea University students and four participant researchers attended. Participants were introduced to the concept of flow and encouraged to connect with their own flow experiences before creating art that reflected the environments in which they occurred. These were used as an elicitation tool for group discussion and analysed as visual data alongside participant annotations. Preliminary findings illustrate the significance of indoor domestic environments (home), work environments and outdoor natural environments for flow. Physical features are reported descriptively and thematically in relation to associated sensory experiences and emotional responses.

This research contributes to an ongoing inter-disciplinary project funded by the Morgan Advanced Studies Institute (MASI). Findings will inform a quantitative survey

assessing their generalisability in a UK adult population. The project will culminate in an exhibition of art at Swansea University and in the creation of draft guidelines supporting architects, interior designers, and urban planners to design spaces for flow.

Dancing Across Differences: Exploring Interdisciplinarity through Creative Methods

Rebecca Edgerley, University of Exeter, UK

Whilst a dizzying plethora of conceptual frameworks and taxonomies abound in the literature, interdisciplinarity still generates ambiguity and malaise as to what is achieved under its auspices (Cairns, Hielscher and Light, 2020). Moreover, it is often assumed that research teams instinctively know how to work in interdisciplinary ways. However, in a climate when so much seems to be at stake – for our planet and for each other – identifying how we might work productively and collaboratively seems imperative. My PhD research is driven by what shapes the 'inter' of interdisciplinarity in the context of academic research focussed on addressing environmental concerns. This presentation will introduce my proposed fieldwork, for which I intend to deliver a series of creative workshops to researchers/professionals from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, using a variety of arts-based techniques and creative methods to disturb this mixed disciplinary space. Participants will be invited to explore environmental issues through creative writing, poetry, performance, and other arts-based techniques. Although I will be using ethnographic observations and interviews to collect data, my intention is to use less conventional, more ephemeral processes and outputs to surface the serendipitous,

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surprising, mundane qualities of interdisciplinary practices that often elude the thematic analyses of fieldnotes and interview transcripts, alone. I will use poetic and performative inquiry to explore how participants express their ideas, perspectives, and knowledges across disciplinary differences. I welcome feedback on this proposal and where the creative process might take me/us in fostering interdisciplinary practices.

The Poetics of Making Place

Mark Sim, Schumacher College, UK

This proposal aims to synthesise some findings from a dissertation I recently authored on the theme of 'poetics of place'. The premise of the work surrounds the idea that the material world, and hence the places we inhabit, is infused with language, and that this language can be patterned poetically or abstractly. The former emerging from sensuous engagement from within, the former from an intellectual imposition from without. The conditions requisite for this poetics to emerge are democratic and localised creativity and production, allowing for skills, story, and memory to be re-territorialised and sustained. And where memory is distributed, as opposed to extracted by specialisation and expertise, imagination can flourish; imagination is remembering forward. Places may not be intuitively thought of as creative media, yet they tell a story and communicate a culture, a way of being, and are monuments to the activity within a region. Poetic and patterned places can allow us to rekindle a relational ontology so lacking in modern societies, which may allow us to connect more delicately and meaningfully with the material world we depend on, that in fact we are of. Therefore how we make place is

a form of artistic expression, of literary forms, that when crafted poetically can inspire imagined futures that are sustainable, meaningful, and beautiful. Places are the palette from which our imagination is painted. Our imagination is inspired from nature, and with places that are patterned with poetics seeds for our imagination can be sown in the world around us.

Aristophanes Reloaded: The Afterlife of Birds in Comic Book Format and the Question of Eco-Hubris

Dimitris Asimakoulas, University of Surrey, UK

This presentation focuses on the adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy *Birds* (414 BCE) into a comic book format and on how language may be leveraged in this multimodal text to highlight ecological discourse.

Aristophanic comic book adaptations, which were first conceived in the late 1980s, have travelled well into the 2010s. They have sold more than one million copies and have been translated into English, French, German and Turkish. The Aristophanic adaptation series constitutes a publication oddity, given the usual editorial barriers afflicting translation. It also appears to be a peculiar Greek invention, a series that came in the slipstream of work done by consecutive generations of philologists, educators, directors and translators and is thus part of a long chain of rewriting (Gentzler 2017; Kalkane 2004; Lefevre 2017; Van Steen 2000) – with an edutainment agenda.

Like the playtext, *Birds* the comic book conceals an eco-critical interpretation; it focuses on Pisthetaerus (literally: 'Trusty'),

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who escapes the bureaucracy of the city and persuades the birds to create a free democracy of birds in the sky: Cloud-cuckoo-land. Strategically positioned, the bird megalopolis allows the birds (and mainly Pisthetaerus) to gain control over both gods and humans. A close reading of the text and its official English translation, as well as of translation solutions given by trainee translators, shows that *Birds* presents opportunities for creatively managing (image-)language configurations. Translators may thus contribute to a refraction of ideas of mutualism and eco-hubris (Cless 2010; Nathan 2023).

Gifts from the Sentient Forest: Botanical Imagination and People-Tree Relations in Northern Finland

John Charles Ryan, Southern Cross University, Australia & Francis Joy, University of Lapland, Finland

In Northern Finland—comprising Finnish Lapland and the urban areas of Oulu and Rovaniemi—the harvesting of old trees has resulted in the decline of ancient boreal ecosystems. Fracturing long-standing interdependencies between people and plants in the country's North, climate change will significantly alter the composition of existing forests and the distribution of biodiversity. This paper examines the role of imagination in 'Gifts from the Sentient Forest', a collaborative, participatory, multispecies project that develops fresh perspectives on Northern Finland's forests and the rich biocultural legacies surrounding them. At the centre of our approach is 'forest sentience', a concept signifying the capacities of trees for sensing, communication, behaviour, learning, memory, and other qualities associated with intelligence. In the context of forest sentience, creativity becomes an

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emergent property of percipient life forms in dynamic exchange.

We position the project broadly within plant humanities, an emerging area of research focusing on the narratives associated with flora and the creative productions inspired by diverse species. Fostering intimacies with trees and the ecological communities of which they are part, the research formulates a set of approaches to countering 'plant blindness' or 'tree neglect'—the inability to notice the flora of one's surroundings exacerbated by the broader cultural failure to value the multidimensional significance of botanical life. Forest sentience thus acts as groundwork for cultivating communication and collaboration, inspiring a transformation of awareness and values through original art, music, poetry, prose, performance, and other creative interventions in which arboreal life plays a vital role.

Demon Reckoning: Unmasking Anthropocentrism for a Sustainable Future

Kethaki Wijesinghe, University of Brighton, UK

Traditional masks in Sri Lanka carry profound cultural significance, symbolizing heritage, identity, and spirituality. Employed for centuries in rituals, performances, and festivals, these finely crafted masks embody the intricate tapestry of Sri Lankan traditions and beliefs, depicting both natural and supernatural phenomena and representing a connection to nature that transcends cultural boundaries. Features of some masks depict disease syndromes and their performances serve as a form of psychotherapy. The colours in these masks possess significant influence over mood and

emotion, with each hue bearing symbolic and scientific meaning that taps into the psychology of colour to elicit healing effects on the body.

Despite their significance, the role of traditional masks in addressing contemporary sustainable challenges remains underexplored, prompting questions about their potential in fostering environmental, economic and social efforts. In a world where anthropocentric perspectives prevail, some individuals often regard themselves as distinct entities with the power to shape the natural environment according to their preferences, neglecting the intricate interconnections with nonhuman species. As the world faces pressing wicked problems like climate change and biodiversity loss, there is a growing recognition of the interconnectedness between cultural heritage and sustainability. Traditional arts, such as mask-making and performances, provide distinctive insights into this connection, offering avenues to explore how cultural practices can contribute to sustainability.

They have the potential of thriving on imagination, seeking to reveal fresh viewpoints and cultivate settings for discussion and debate on alternative modes of existence, encouraging and empowering individuals to set their imaginations free. This proposed topic aims to explore the intersection of cultural sustainability and environmental conservation through the lens of traditional masks in Sri Lanka. It seeks to understand how these ancient traditions can stimulate imagination, promote community involvement, and increase awareness about environmental issues stemming from anthropocentric perspectives.

Biopolymer Aesthetics: Recent Practices in Aotearoa [VIRTUAL]

Raewyn Martyn, Ilam School of Fine Arts, New Zealand

This 20-minute paper will discuss use of bio-based plastics and biopolymer aesthetics within recent artist-led research in Aotearoa New Zealand. Bio-based plastics are derived from living things like plants, algae, and bacterial growth (Nakajima, Dijkstra, & Loos. 2017). Human use of bio-based polymers dates back at least 12,000 years to early plant and animal glues (Lattermann 2015; Sakr, Akmal A., et al. 2018). Our understanding of plastic histories can be read through non-Indigenous artistic, scientific, petro-hegemonic and colonial material worldviews (Povinelli 2016; Haluza-Delay 2012; Davis 2022) and through the continuums of Indigenous arts and sciences (Smith 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández 2013; Lopesi 2021). These historical lenses are each important to understanding biopolymer aesthetics.

Biopolymer aesthetics involve affect and feeling (Buck-Morris 1992; Heyes 2020), that are specific to bio-based plasticity and materiality. These aesthetics happen at the playful intersections of artistic, cultural, scientific, and industrial methodologies. And artworks utilising bio-based materials and processes create collaborative opportunities for critical interventions within conventional methods. Critical arts-led research of this kind is connected to histories of pataphysical science—Alfred Jarry's approach to empirical scientific knowledge, involving playful disregard for rational methods, and influential within surrealism and more recent practices (Shanken 2013; Lewis 2020).

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Biopolymer aesthetics involve biomorphic, biophilic, and bioeconomic approaches to non-verbal and material languages where bio-based materials take on life-like and life-loving forms. This paper discusses how these aesthetics can provoke different imaginaries and different material relationships that contribute to critical considerations of contemporary and historical efforts toward circular bioeconomy (Altman 2021).

'Pure Waste': Playing, Hacking, and Jamming Production

Chloe Germaine and Paul Wake, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

This paper identifies and explores game making and game play practices as aesthetic interventions in facing up to the challenges of climate change and global inequality. We focus on hacking and jamming as they pertain to the making and playing of games. We will discuss some of our own perverse game hacks that seek to disrupt the status of the game as product, before moving to consider the practice of game jams and how they might, if reimagined, challenge the ecologically disastrous growth paradigm in which game production and consumption are currently mired. In so doing, we want to challenge commonplace assumptions about what games are and offer a radical critique of the systems-thinking that characterises game studies. We investigate the idea that games are systems and argue that the system is not an abstract, mechanical description of the world. Rather, games reveal systems are stories. We also challenge the idea that games replicate systems that exist in the real world and instead consider how hacking and jamming can offer alternative stories to a mechanistic understanding of nature and human labour alike, an

understanding that underpins extractive capitalism.



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