Can sensory encounters in nature help to bridge the gap between people and the natural world?

Social art practice, immersive workshop. Cromarty 2019. Photograph Rosie Newman

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MA Art and Social Practice UW11011 Social Practice Project. Assignment 3. Critical Evaluation

Voice: the breath's tooth.
Thought: the brain's bone.
Birdsong: an extension of the beak.
Speech: The antler of the mind.
Or
We have been here before, eating raw air, but have always
Forgotten

Robert Bringhurst (2007)

Introduction

As an educator, environmentalist, and multidisciplinary artist, I aspire to raise awareness of the importance and fragility of nature. For this review I present three distinct yet related

Socially Engaged Art projects. These aim to nurture a restorative relationship between people and nature and ignite a desire to protect it and support a more sustainable future.

The projects examine how a variety of immersive art encounters can alter people's perceptions of their local environments by enhancing feelings of re-connection with the places where they live, as well as with nature more generally. The experiences are analysed for the effect they had on the participant's sense of well-being and their attitude towards the natural world during and after the events. The projects are categorized according to three 'elements': Earth, Sky and Water.

Background

People and nature

The recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services IPBES report (IPBES 2019) comprehensively charts nature's dangerous decline. It identifies people's disconnection from nature as a primary concern with respect to biodiversity loss and climate change. To combat this, the report calls for transformative change both on a personal and collective level. This echoes what Jim Robbins (2020) says, *"a closer connection and new relationship with nature is needed across the majority of the population".* The IPBES report encourages all nations to play their part in raising awareness of our natural environment and it suggests that indigenous and local knowledge could play a key role in reconnecting people to nature.

The report also makes a link between disconnection from nature and poor mental wellbeing. This is known as the Nature Deficit Disorder (Children's Nature Network 2020) and was first coined by Richard Louv (2006) and cited in Emily Beaumont's (2020) recent article for the *Ecologists*. The Nature Deficit Disorder suggests that for positive transformation in mental health to occur people need to experience nature on a profound basis through activities that help them to 'tune into nature'. For example, driving through scenery in a car or playing golf is not enough to change perspectives. Time in nature must be meaningful and connective to have lasting and positive effects. This essay examines how art can be used as a catalyst to transform perspectives and increase people's connectedness to nature through meaningful outside experiences.

Art and transformative change

Art is frequently used as a tool for transformation by artists. A good example is the work of Joseph Beuys, (2004), a co-founder of the Green Party. Beuys was interested in how to transform thinking on a large scale through 'Social Sculpting'. Simon O'Sullivan *(*2006 p.1) discusses the way a transformation occurs as a result of 'an encounter' describing it as

"something in the world that forces us to think" and causes a *rupture* - that is the moment of change when perception shifts, and transformation occurs. Ruptures are experienced when a connection is made from the outside world through the senses, mind, and spirit.

Gaston Bachelard's book *Poetics of Space* (2014) and Juhani Pallasmaa (2012) book *Eyes of the Skin*, set out enlightened new ways of working in environments. This illustrated how the effects of space, objects, and atmosphere, have significant impacts on people's feelings, thoughts, and aesthetics. Encounters that happen within a context brimming with nature can bring about changes in people's perceptions that awaken their senses. Awareness of aesthetics is therefore important when applied to projects that aim to induce transformative change.

In his book Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty (2002) believed that all people experience the world through the 'lived body' and its interconnectedness with the phenomenal world. This goes beyond the traditional notion of nature as something 'out there' and suggests that the experience of nature is intertwined with the body and integral to a person's sense of self.

Combining the phenomenological experience with haptic knowledge gained through physical interaction with natural materials can further induce a sense of connectedness Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Physical and psychological connections are made with touch, smell, and sound that imprints on the memory by triggering the familiar 'biophilia' (Edward, 2003). Moments of rupture can occur in these places.

The inspirational readings of David Abram*Becoming Animal* (2010) and Robin Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweet Grass* (2013*)* exhort the value of indigenous knowledge and how this can catalyse feelings of belonging, ecological literacy and acts of stewardship of the natural world. The importance of indigenous knowledge together with the mystic sense of nature and "Contemporary aesthetics and the neglect of natural beauty" are explored further by Hepburn (2004). The projects described in this essay aim to inspire home-grown knowledge that embrace both the ephemeral and spiritual qualities of nature.

Feeling the polyrhythmic pulse of this place –
this huge windswept body of water and stone.
This vexed being in whose flesh we're entangled.
Becoming earth.
Becoming animal.
Becoming, in this manner, fully human.

David Abram (2010)

The Projects: Earth, Sky and Water

For further details see weblink: https://www.rosienewman.com/

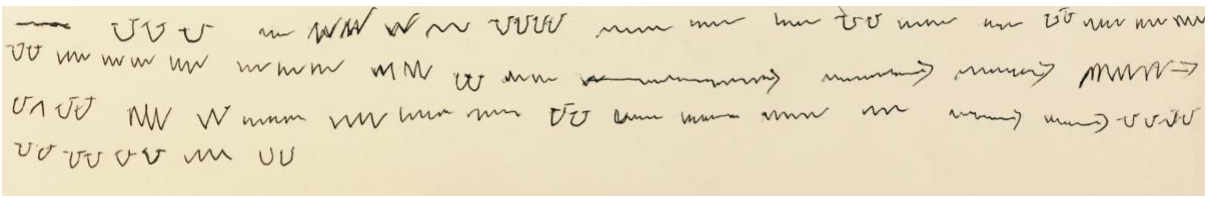
To test how immersive experiences may enable transformative responses in people, a series of projects were devised over a three-year period. These provided opportunities to open participants hearts and minds to new ways of seeing the world close to where they lived. The projects demonstrated 3 bespoke methods that responded to people, places, and themes, all with the intention to transform attitudes and promote wellbeing. Appendices A:1 and A:2 provide further details.

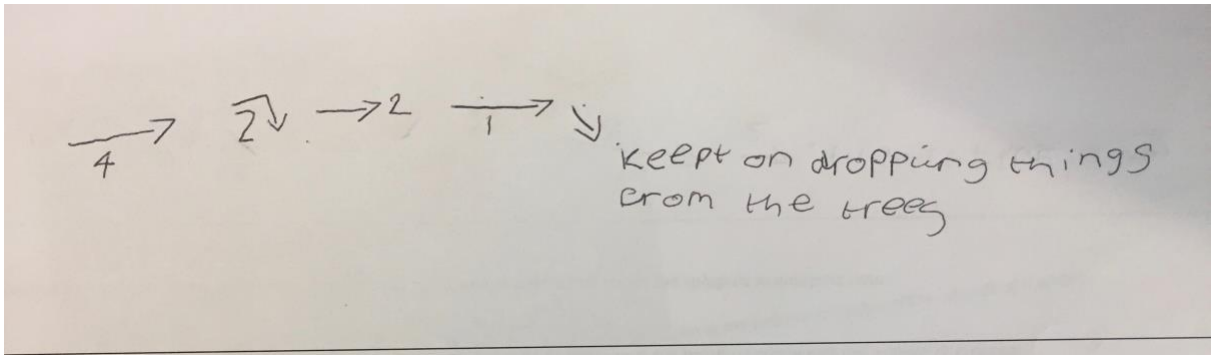
The Earth Project (2018-19)

For further details see weblink: https://www.rosienewman.com/earth

Mindful acts of listening can be a good way to calm the mind and learn about biodiversity. The project focussed on life in a local woodland and explored ways to let go of word-centric obsessions and replace them with sensory observational methods to interact with the natural world.

Initially the participants spent time in silence in the woods developing a heightened awareness of the sensations of the physical landscape experienced alone yet within sight of each other. These zen-like encounters involved listening attentively to a singular bird song and then making rhythmic marks with pencil on paper to express the sounds that could be heard. This is a process inspired by the interpretive drawings of whale songs by marine biologist, Eva Saultis's (2013, p.120).





Figures 1 and 2. *Examples of participants sound drawings. April 2018, Scottish School of Forestry, Inverness. Photograph by R. Newman 2018*

An extension of the listening practice developed further by using a mobile phone to record experimental noises made with the human voice, that mimicked a particular bird in the forest, for example clicks, trills and hoots. This playful and challenging practice resulted in an eclectic collection of 'human-bird' songs that were displayed as part of the Human Forest Exhibition. For further details see weblink: https://www.rosienewman.com/encounter-1

Figure 3. *Human Forest Exhibition. Handmade nests displayed amongst stacked chairs with audios of 'human birds' playing from inside them. Inverness Creative Academy. Photograph by Roxane Permer. 2020.*

In the final stages of this project, participants created interpretations of nests formed from foraged materials they found in the forest.

Figure 4. *Foraging for nest materials. Photograph by R. Newman 2018*.

The activities encouraged people to stray from footpaths to scour the forest floors for materials, their fascination in the texture and flexibility of twigs and grasses grew and provoked curiosity. As a form of pedagogy, this enhanced learning about the biology of birds, their habitats and nest construction. The exercises helped to build confidence and self-esteem as participants found their voice individually and as part of the group. The project helped people to tap into their imaginations and be creative without self-consciousness or competitiveness. The playful encounters were beneficial for those who found normal communication or writing a barrier.

Figure 5 and 6. Handmade nests from horsehair, moss, feathers and grass. Created by participants. Photograph by R. Newman 2019

For further information about the Earth Project, see Appendix B.1a and B.1b.

The Sky Project (2019)

For further details see weblink: https://www.rosienewman.com/sky

This project was an event which took place over one evening in the writer's hometown of Cromarty. It was ephemeral; a temporary gathering of local volunteers who occupied a space for a short period of time. The project intended to have an immediate, positive impact on mental health and on the sense of place and connection to it.

The project arose from the rescue of an abandoned fishing boat, condemned as an eyesore and due for disposal to make way for a carpark development. Following negotiations, it was agreed that the boat could be temporarily relocated on the Links for an art project.

The displacement of the boat attracted much attention; like Marcel Duchamp's *Urinal (*Camfield, 2015); it was seen in a new light when positioned out of context. Local people gathered to look more closely at the boat (see figure 7) and this prompted conversations about the social and cultural history of the town; one local woman sang an impromptu ballad next to the boat in the former Cromarty dialect about her brother who used to mend herring nets.

Figure 7. Local people looking at the boat in its new position before the art event; commenting on its beauty, the copper nails used in its construction and the traditional practice of steaming wood to make the curved hull. Photograph by Rosie Newman, 2019.

Cromarty is far from a city, but it still experiences light pollution from oil rigs moored in the Firth. It is therefore difficult for local people to experience the night sky in complete darkness. James Turrell's (2007) artwork, *Deer Shelter Skyspace* enhances perception and appreciation of the sky by cutting an aperture into a ceiling. This project achieved a similar affect by hanging a found fishing net in the bow of the boat to create a hammock that dropped below the rim and offered a comfortable and unique way of viewing the cosmos. The boats' rim created a frame that blocked out the dazzle from the rigs and focussed the viewers gaze towards the sky (see figure 8).

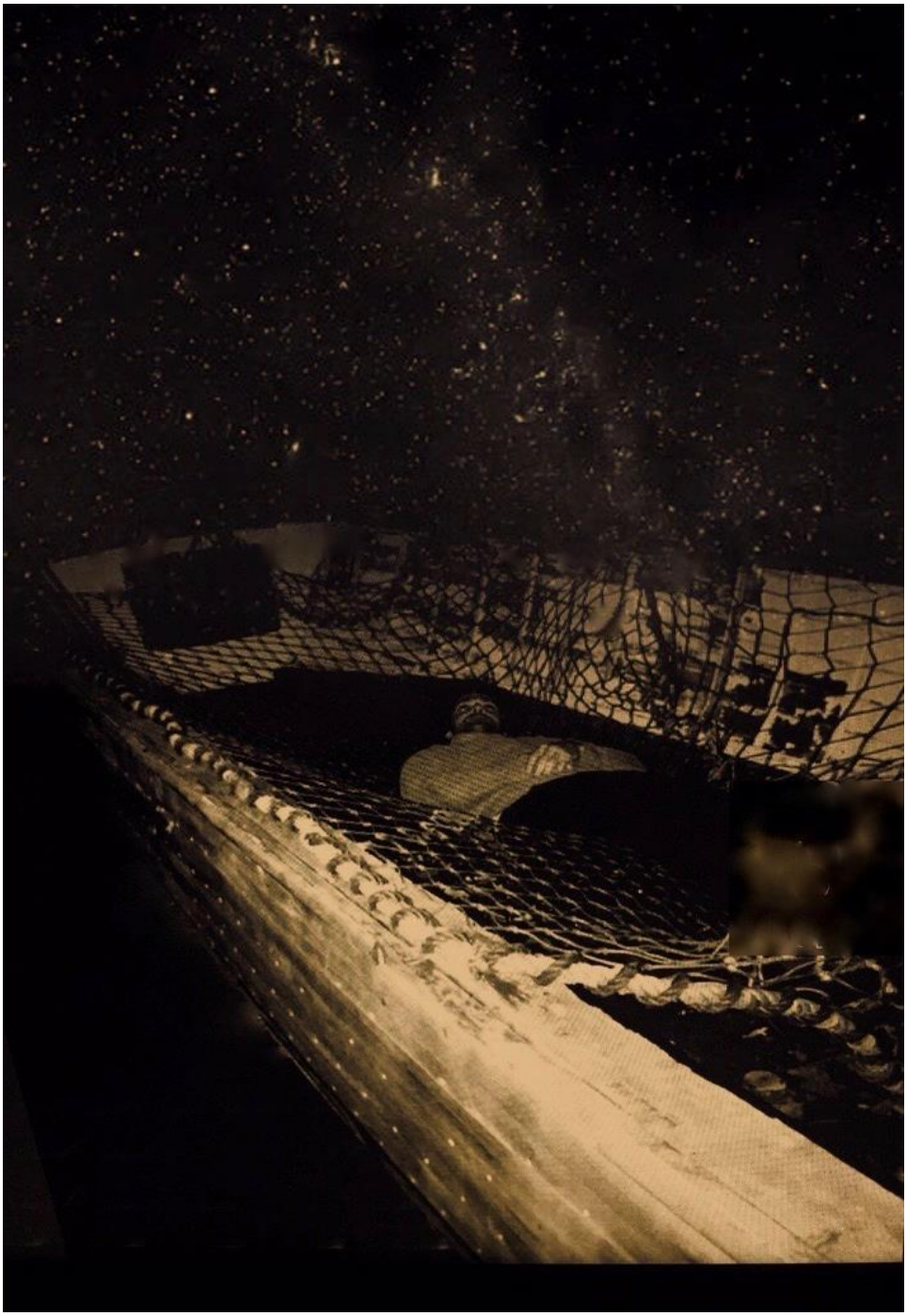


Figure 8. A participant star bathing in the boat, Cromarty. Photograph by Rosie Newman 2019.

Participants were invited to attend an event through a poster nailed to the boat. The event was designed to focus and quieten the mind and body, unifying people by connecting them to their home, through the act of gazing deeply at the night sky. The boat was placed near the beach, a fire was lit close by, chairs and blankets laid out and attendees were greeted with tastes to welcome and enhance sensory memory such as whisky, herbal teas and mints. The hammock inside the boat was accessed by a small ladder. Participants could

spend time alone with the stars whilst others waited with the rest of the group for their turn.

The aesthetic encounters and phenomenological experiences included sounds, smells, temperature, and tastes by being next to the sea and fire or whilst being cradled in the boat gazing at the stars on the hammock. These experiences where interwoven with stories, memories, and accounts through dialogical encounters between participants. Everyone enjoyed star gazing at their own pace and in solitude and were able to return to the group when they wanted to. See website: https://www.rosienewman.com/encounter.

Figure 8. A participant enters to boat. Photograph by Rosie Newman, 2019.

Feedback forms were issued to participants a week after the event. Most people (80%) filled in the forms which included the memories, sensations, and thoughts they had experienced. Comments often referred to feeling connected to place and 'in awe' of the universe. Others recited or wrote poetry or made artworks (see figure 9). The immersive encounter created a significant memory for the participants and enhanced their connections to Cromarty and their fellow participants. Further information on the Sky Project and the feedback received can be seen in Appendix B:2.

Figure 9. An example of a participant's artwork 2020.

Further information on the Sky Project can be seen in Appendix B:2.

The Water Project (2019 - 2020)
For further details see weblink: https://www.rosienewman.com/water

The final project focused on underwater life in and around the Moray Firth. Initially this involved trips to local beaches, harbours and ponds. Meanderings and dialogues led to an invitation to attend a talk about how marine animals use acoustics to communicate by Dr Cheney of the University of Aberdeen's Lighthouse Field Station in Cromarty.

Figure 10. Participants visiting the University of Aberdeen Lighthouse Field Station, Cromarty for a talk about marine animals and acoustic technology. Photograph Rosie Newman. 2020

Dr Cheney explained how hydrophones can be dropped into the water to hear and record underwater sounds. The visit included an audio demonstration of sounds made by whales, dolphins and seals living in the Moray Firth.

The University loaned the group some of their hydrophones to enable participants to listen to the marine environment for themselves in new and dynamic ways. The hydrophones were used at various locations including a pond, a loch and the sea. Headphones allowed participants to lean close into the underwater world, accessing new worlds that transformed their perceptions. Through trials and experiences, the group learned how to work the technology. They took it in turns to swap headphones and this encouraged collaboration and enabled the group to experience a shared and intimate connectivity simultaneously. The participants soon became competent at using the hydrophones, deploying methods used by communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) such as swapping knowledge and teaching each other. Their playful experiments led them to drop stones into the harbour to record rhythmic plops (see figure 11).

Figure 11. Participants listening with hydrophones to the sounds of stones dropping in to the sea at Avoch Harbour, The Black Isle. Photograph by Rosie Newman 2020.

Inspired once again by Eva Saulitis (2013p.120), who created a code to describe the bewildering sounds that whales make, the participants prepared sticks dipped in ink to interpret the sounds they heard from the hydrophone recordings (see figure 12). With mindful precision, the sensorial contact was redefined with lyrical lines onto paper to create a new rhythmic language. These pages were made into ‘sound books’ and displayed alongside a collage of sound recordings from the project.

See website: https://www.rosienewman.com/h-creative-responses

Figure 12. Example of drawing made by a participant whilst listening to pre-recorded whale song. Photograph by Rosie Newman 2020.

Further information on the Water Project can be seen in Appendix B:3.

Evaluation

The projects were evaluated for the impact they had on the participants' well-being and their attitudes towards nature before and after the events.

Analysis of Data

All three projects were dynamic and evolved in response to the ideas and interests of the participants in real time. Feedback systems where therefore developed which maintained spontaneity and allowed the projects to take their natural course. Preparing specific questions in advance was problematic as it could 'break the magic' or seem intrusive, so questionnaires were used alongside ethnographic and active research approaches which drew out key themes and patterns. In addition, for the Sky Project, rather than questioning participants about nature, they were asked about their connection to the place where they lived and their feelings of contemplation under the stars. The key findings are summarised in figure 13.

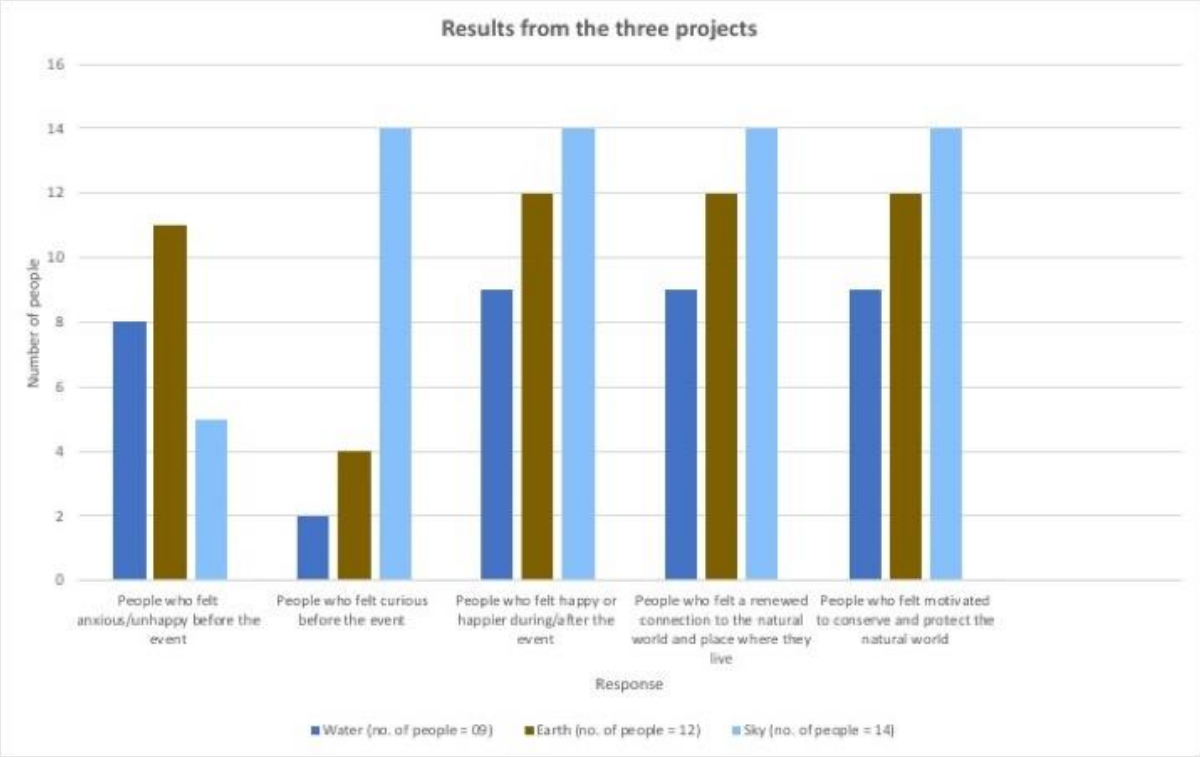


Figure 13. Chart illustrating feedback responses from the three projects.

The feedback suggests a positive shift in attitudes and wellbeing across all 3 projects. The immersive encounters helped people to feel less anxious and enabled renewed connection with the natural world. There was a positive shift following the projects of people wanting to conserve and protect nature. Specific examples of this included how the Sea Project inspired some participants to organise beach clean-ups. Two participants from the Earth Project stated months later that they noticed and appreciated birds in a new way. Others expressed a sense of awe of nature; one young lady said, “It just makes me feel happy”. Further examples of the feedback received is documented in Appendices B1, B.2 and B.3.

The Artists Role

The role of the artist was paramount to the success of the projects. Grant Kester wrote a forward to Jay Koh’s (2015) book, where he identified the key characteristics of dialogical projects, one being the presence of the artist. Pablo Helguera (2011) describes how the artist has an important role as director, initiator and editor and that these attributes are played out whilst guiding the projects towards the goals set.

In these projects the artist role changed and adapted during the course of the work. Sometimes the artist facilitated participants to meet the desired outcomes, maintain momentum and encourage creativity; at other times to connect the dots as a perceptive interpreter and sometimes as an observer and recorder of happenings. An understanding of people’s backgrounds and personalities was crucial to get the best experience for everyone

involved. The artist must also be able to tune in to 'the Nunchi', a term used in Korea to describe an awareness of feelings and atmospheres (E. Hong. 2019), this helps to make the most of any situation.

The common role and goal of the artist in all of the projects was to inspire participation and lead people into the unknown spaces of discovery and imagination - the aesthetic encounters and the dialogical exchanges that could create a change of perspective.

Relating Theory to Practice

All three projects sought to move away from iconizing nature which can lead to separateness. Timothy Morton (2007) *Ecology without Nature* postulates that 'putting nature on a pedestal, does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of women". These projects therefore attempted to integrate nature into 'everyday life'. This was done by connecting people to nature through a spiral of layers that moved awareness from the outside to the inside of the body and out again into society, this is illustrated in figure 14.

Figure 14. Map of practice, 2020.

Connecting to nature through sensory encounters relieved mental health problems and made people feel more connected to each other and their local environment. This is known as Ecopsychology (Robbins, 2020). Theodore Roszak's (1995) book *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth/Healing the Mind*, compares environmental problems with the insular psychological problems that humans face. The feedback gleaned through the projects reinforced the link between mental health and the environmental crisis. In *the Voice of the Earth,* Roszak (2002) examines ecopsychology and links an individual's harmony with his or her "own deep self" as one that requires not merely a journey to the interior but a harmonizing with the environmental world.

Other fields and disciplines such as pedagogical approaches were examined to aid this transformation such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'Situated Learning' which recognizes that learning is social and can be a slow process beginning with 'legitimate peripheral learning' before building up to 'full membership'. An example of this method was how the participants learned to use the hydrophones in the Water Project. Here they demonstrated 'The Learning Zone Model' (Senninger, 2000) which was developed by the German adventure pedagogue Tom Senninger. This exemplifies how gentle tactics can be used to build confidence, cross comfort zones and expand potential. With the Earth and Water Projects, people developed continuity, familiarity and trust over a long period of time enabling more creative experiments. The Sky Project was a one-off, but people connected quickly through the uniqueness of the immersive encounter which led to 'connected dialogues' shared around the fire.

All the projects heightened awareness and articulation of the 'in-between space' that "attune to invention" and "poetic wisdom" as Rita Irvin describes (2003, p. 63). This is the rupture and the place were individuals become interested in self-transformation (Crowther, 2018) and where hope and inspiration towards a more interconnected world is born.

Conclusion

The projects demonstrated how art can fold into the social space and help participants to experience their local land, sky and seascapes. These processes have involved deeply immersive activities that examine the role of sensory experiences within the phenomenological natural world. Improved wellbeing can be reached through mindful activities such as deeply gazing and listening. Participants experienced a rupture (O'Sullivan, 2006 p.1) that awakened their imagination and memories through shared experiences, dialogue, poetry, and art.

These collective encounters could form the basis for enquires that may cause a shift in perspectives and trigger a deeper sense of a shared social and ecological home. The

projects hold the potential to go beyond personal and social wellbeing and lead to wider appreciation of nature and our relationship with it.

Epilogue

The Covid-19 crisis brings personal, social, and global changes in our daily habits. Journalists and writers parallel the pandemic with the climate crisis (Baker, 2020). Indian scholar Vandana Shiva (2020) in her thoughts about the pandemic says that "All life-threatening emergencies of our times are rooted in a mechanistic, militaristic, anthropocentric world view of humans as separate from nature."

As lockdown begins to lift during the last weeks of writing this essay, millions of people prepare to re-enter society. I wonder whether they will rush back to the shopping precincts for retail therapy or will their bodies guide them to the wilder places and the restorative powers of nature?

Under the Stars

Under the stars
Together we lay side by side,
My boy and I, to watch the sky,
To him, a magical mystery ride,
Soaring in our boat up high,

I pointed up and told him,
Of the journey of stars, so bright,
How millions of years ago,
They released their dazzling light,

And then we lay in silence,
In wonder and in awe,
Of the beauty of the heavens,
The universe at our door,

Lying in our hammock,
The world around us gone,
Cosy, tranquil and transfixed,
The world, my boy and I, as one.

Written by participant Ciara who shared the boat with her 3-year-old son. Sky Project [November 2019. Cromarty] by Rosie Newman 2020

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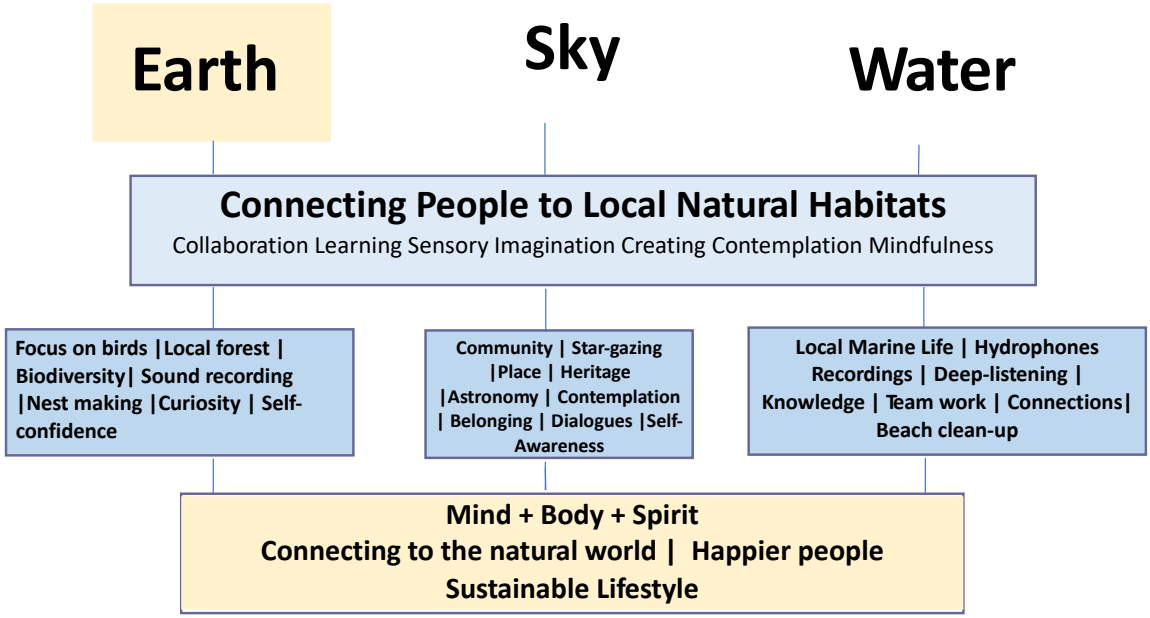
Appendices

Appendix A 1: Diagram of 3 projects: Connecting People to Nature 2020.


Earth
Sky
Water
Connecting People to Local Natural Habitats
Collaboration Learning Sensory Imagination Creating Contemplation Mindfulness
Focus on birds |Local forest | Biodiversity| Sound recording |Nest making |Curiosity | Self-confidence
Community | Star-gazing |Place | Heritage |Astronomy | Contemplation | Belonging | Dialogues |Self-Awareness
Local Marine Life | Hydrophones Recordings | Deep-listening | Knowledge | Team work | Connections| Beach clean-up
Mind + Body + Spirit
Connecting to the natural world | Happier people
Sustainable Lifestyle

Appendix A 2: Summary of 3 Projects

Summary 3 Projects Methodology | Context | Content
Multidisciplinary methods, materials, and techniques
Social: Participants, collaboration, learning, exchanges, dialogues, community.
Technology: Hydrophones, recording equipment, mobile phones, cameras, Sky Scanner (astronomy) App., computers.
Materials: Foraged natural materials, art and craft materials, recycled objects (boat/chairs/nets)
Bodily Senses/Phenomenology: voices, listening, breath, touch, taste, smell, fire, nature, water, sky, weather, atmosphere.
Commonality over all projects
• Various collaborators but each project led by the same artist.
• Based in locality of home and work – Inverness and the Black Isle.
• Produced creative responses in the forms of sound, film, assemblages, drawings, and sculptures.
• All are concerned with connecting people to nature in the local place and the phycological and transformative changes that may occur.
• All concerned with enhancing wellbeing and creating positive attitudes towards nature.

Appendix A 3: Primary Aims Compared to Results

How do the project results compare to aims and objectives?
How have the projects improved Wellbeing?
• Feeling more connected to nature
• More Relaxed
• Less anxiety
• Curiosity
• Creativity
• Friendships
• Hobbies
• Interests
• Dialogical aesthetics
Have the projects caused positive change in perspective about the environment and contributed to a more sustainable future?
• Increased awareness of climate change & links with biodiversity
• Activities such as recycling, litter picking, joining conservation volunteers
• Greater connectiveness and awareness to local heritage & natural areas
• More likely to think about nature in future choices • Counteracts alienation of all living things
Contradictions: Longevity and depth of affects.
• Hard to predict how long the affect will last.
• Affect may be too subtle to calculate.
• Affect cannot be accurately measured.
• It is hard to record/analyze during the projects due to not wanting to break the flow/magic. •
Conclusion
• Active ethnographic research methods show that the aims of the projects produced positives results regarding connecting people to nature. It is concluded that the degree and longevity of these results are hard to prove. The research considers that the affects could be subconscious or accumulative over years to come and that even a small change in the right direction is worthwhile.

Appendix B:1 Summary of Earth Project

Appendix B. 1.a; Birds and Trees

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Earth Project
The Language of Birds</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Connecting people with nature and improving wellbeing through sensory encounters to include exploring, discovering, conserving and sharing together</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participants</td><td>Dates</td><td>Places</td><td>Collaborators</td></tr>
<tr><td>John Muir Award Students

12 Adults

Aged between 18-56

5 female 7 male</td><td>January 2018 - June 2019</td><td>Scottish School of Forestry, Inverness College.

Merkinch Nature Reserve, Inverness

Munlochy, The Black Isle.</td><td>Inverness College University of the Highlands and Islands, UHI

Conservation Volunteers, Merkinch Nature Reserve, Inverness

Scottish Natural Heritage. Roskill Site of Special Scientific Interest on the Black Isle</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"><u>Stages of Project</u>
Stage 1. Listening and recording sounds from nature with the emission of any human-made sounds (no machines or voices)
Stage 2. Drawing shapes and patterns to describe the shapes that the birds made
Stage 3. Foraging for natural materials
Stage 4. Creating nests
Stage 5. Assembling/editing the materials and audios
Stage 6. Exhibition

Participants
• Mindful listening to bird song in nature
• Interpretation of bird songs using marks on paper
• Cyanotype printing in the forest using natural materials
• Interpretations and recording of bird songs using voice on phones</td></tr>
</table>

- Foraging for nest materials from forest
- Sculpting nest shapes from natural materials

Artist

- Photography
- Transferring and editing recordings onto speakers
- Placing speakers inside bird houses
- Creating sculptural 'trees' using recycled wooden chairs
- Arranging the nests and audios in two exhibitions

Exhibitions

- The Sumer Show. Black Isle Collectives. The Stables, Cromarty Arts Trust, Cromarty. (Included sensory listening workshops in nature) 13th – 20th July 2019
- Winter School Exhibition Inverness Creative Academy. Art & Social Practice, Shetland College UHI. 13th – 17th January 202

Example Feedback:

Taken from interviews, recordings and note taking

"we just went out there and listened to the birds, it's simple, it's free. I've never done that before"

"It is truly amazing when you really start to listen to them"
"this [grass] is really bendy, I think it will make a good nest, ah ha this is softer though"

"how do birds do this with just their beak? I can't believe it"
"this is great fun"

Walk in the cool of the day
Find a new way to free your mind
Push off the heavy things
Run faster now hearing the birds sing
We can gather here and now

Poem by Participant aged 57

"I didn't feel like coming along today as I had a migraine, but I'm glad I came as that has made me feel better, I am still tired but in a good way"

"I always think of that day we got laughing trying to make bird noises, I always think of that when I hear birds now" (several months later)

Earth Project: Creative legacy: Poetry and cyanotype prints. Final exhibitions (human made nests and boxes containing human sounds imitating birds) *Inhabit* 2019/ 20 Rosie Newman

Appendix B.1. b. Birds of the forest

Earth project: Stages of activities 'Birds of the Forest' -
Stage 1. Bird song - drawings
1. Being still in the forest, in solitude yet within sight of each other and concentrating on natural sounds to heighten awareness to the sounds and sensations of the physical landscape.
2. Listen attentively to a singular bird song. Using pencil on paper find ways to describe the songs by making rhythmic marks, working out how to describe tone, rhythm etc.
Stage 2. Bird song – audios
3. Focus attention on the sound made by one bird. Mimic what you can hear using voice, trying out experimental sounds (without words) example clicks, trills, hoots. Record with a mobile phone. 4. Sound recordings edited, anonymized and collated.
Stage 3. Bird nests- foraging
5. Forage in the forest for natural materials. Create cyanotype sun-prints
6. Forage for natural materials. Make nest-like sculptures. 7. Draw & photograph. Display/exhibit artworks.

Appendix B:2 Summary of Sky Project

Sky Project Place under the Stars			
Connecting local community with each other and highlighting the place where they live, and position on earth			
Participants	**Dates**	**Places**	**Other people involved**
14 Cromarty community volunteers 7 females & 7 males Aged between 3 and 84 years old	30th October 2019 Short one off even – one evening only	Cromarty Links. The Black Isle, Ross-shire. Scotland. Population of 720 Writers hometown	Landowner Architect for the Cromarty Community Cinema. Local boat owner Harbour master Café Owner Farmer with forklift truck Community volunteers
Background and Methods			

- The Mind Body Spirit performance/ event was entitled BRIM which is a Cromarty dialect word that refers to boat that has swelled with sea water & ready for launch
- Encouraging a sense of belonging and curiosity by connecting people through place/history/heritage/natural land/sea/skyscape.
- Saving an abandoned fishing boat/and nets to create a star-gazing interactive sculpture
- Star-gazing inspired by Abriachan Community Trust & Highland Astronomy Tour.
- Mindful activities include deep- gazing into the cosmos whilst suspended/supported in a net.
- Multi- Sensory awareness, phenomenology i.e. smells of the sea, heat of the fire, sounds of waves and tastes of refreshments.
- Connecting with self/nature in solitude and in community gathering around a fire
- Creation of memorable responses by participants using a range of methods from poetry, drawing and model making
- Lying in a local boat and looking up at the stars and the night sky

- Social connection - sharing a fire, drinking whisky or tea, discussing place, planets and stars
- Building trust/sharing experience and thoughts with other members of the community- Building houses that reflect the landscape and the terrain

Example Feedback:
Taken from questionnaires and interviews

How did you feel before you arrived at the event?

"I wasn't sure what to expect beforehand" "Felt curious before" "I was feeling unwell"

How did you feel after the event?

"It was better than expected" "Provoked memories" "More relaxed" "Sitting around, and close to, a fire was a key part of the event - unlike official bonfires where you are part of an audienc (at a distance) rather than a participant. Enjoyed the whisky too!"
"Extremely relaxed and at ease" "Really positive, in awe of the experience"
"I felt like I was floating in space, it was so relaxing"
"I didn't realize there were so many starts up there, it's truly amazing"

Would you recommend (or not) this sort of event to others and why?

"Yes, I would definitely recommend this to others, and already have, having spoken to some friends after the event, they were all asking to try it out too, unfortunately the boat is now gone, but it's definitely inspired us to go stargazing. It's a great way to now appreciate our home from a very different perspective!"
"It was great to be able to go from the immersion in the boat to the lovely group to discuss and appreciate the experience". "Makes you stop and contemplate our place in the world".

Sky Project: creative output/legacy: Performance/event *Brim* **Rosie Newman (**2019)
Prints, drawings, photographs and model

Appendix B:3 Summary of Water Project

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Water Project
Listening to the underwater world</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Using sensory encounters to improve mental health. Connecting people with nature by exploring, discovering, conserving and sharing together.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Participants</th><th>Dates</th><th>Places</th><th>Collaborators</th></tr>
<tr><td>9 Adults

John Muir Award Students

Aged between 48-70

3 females
6 males</td><td>October 2019 – March 2020</td><td>Scottish School of Forestry, Inverness.

Loch Ness, Inverness.

Locations around The Black Isle, Highland, Scotland

• Rosemarkie
• Cromarty
• Avoch</td><td>Inverness College, University of the Highlands and Islands, UHI

University of Aberdeen Lighthouse Field Station, Cromarty.

John Muir Award Trust, Pitlochry, Scotland.

Anita Bayondorian: Artist.

Terry Small: Sound Recordist.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">Activities & Methodologies</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Stages
1. Attending a lecture and demonstration about hydrophones and marine mammal acoustics at University of Aberdeen Field Station, Cromarty
2. Mindful listening, under water exercises using hydrophones in various local locations in nature (ponds, loch, sea)
3. Mindful listening to recordings of whales, dolphins and seals from the Moray Firth (local sea)
4. Mindful listening with a singing bowl on the beach
5. Interpretations of sounds using ink and sticks
6. Handmade books of sound drawings
7. Recording sounds of water on phones
8. On-line film and sound collage of collected audios of water and water sounds
9. Exhibition of collection of books, drawings, and audios.</td></tr>
</table>

Example Feedback Taken from questionnaires and interviews and recordings
"I didn't realize there was all that life under there" "If we are harming nature, then we are harming ourselves" "Yes, I feel really good, being in nature and listening to the sounds" "I was surprised that we collected so much litter off the beach" "I think being in nature definitely helps mental health being in fresh air and getting exercise also seeing God's creation is wonderful" "Hearing the sounds underwater helped me realize there is life everywhere all around us" "I enjoyed making the sounds with ink into pictures it was fun and interesting to see everyone did it differently" "Yes, people can feel more connected to nature through doing this course and all the work in it Art poems and going outside"
Creative output/legacy: Water project: Sound books, audio/film (see website)