

Report on the 2026 EARTH research
symposium at University of the Arts London

Lines of Flight

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EARTH (Ecological Arts Research Transdisciplinary Hive) is a network of researchers spanning University of the Arts London (UAL). UAL comprises six London-based Colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Chelsea College of Arts, and Wimbledon College of Arts (CCW), Central Saint Martins (CSM), London College of Communication (LCC), and London College of Fashion (LCF).

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Contents

Symposium abstract and theme	4
UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines produced by the Climate Emergency Network	6
Symposium Programme	8
Keynote Talks	9
Discussion	14
UAL Research Contributions	15
Session 1: Territories of arts, sciences and other ecological knowledges	16
Presentation abstracts	17
Session 2: Shifting the narrative	22
Presentation abstracts	23
Session 3: Redirecting systems and values	28
Presentation abstracts	29
Creative contributions	34
Contribution abstracts	35
Panel: Building and sustaining collaborative research	41
More about the panellists	42
Symposium Evaluation	46
About the EARTH network	49
EARTH conveners	
Acknowledgements	50

Symposium Abstract



Attendees at the symposium | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Earth Day is only one day. Since 2022 at University of the Arts London (UAL), we have celebrated, connected, and created together for a whole week in April each year. Holding the space for Earth Week is no small thing – the UK’s hosting of COP26 galvanized awareness and initiatives across all sectors and parts of society, but since then here and globally we see backsliding on climate commitments and net zero targets. UAL’s annual Earth Week backs up commitments with action, and each week-long programme is packed with creativity, expertise, leadership and vision, engaging staff, students, partners and the public in venues across our six colleges.

‘Lines of Flight’ – the research symposium reported here – took place on the final day of UAL’s 2026 Earth Week. The symposium was convened by EARTH (Ecological Arts Research Transdisciplinary Hive), our recently formalized network of researchers spanning UAL’s colleges and disciplines. The symposium title resonates with ‘Fault Lines,’ the theme of the week-long programme produced by UAL’s Climate Emergency Network (CEN). While EARTH focuses on research, the two networks have overlapping memberships and collaborate closely.

The concept ‘lines of flight’ was developed by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari to denote trajectories that escape fixed structures and orders, to unsettle ways of thinking and doing. As our research symposium attempted to go beyond the established ways of knowing and doing in the context of the climate crisis, we found this concept instructive in actively engaging with ruptures. For example, we query, Where are fault lines or gaps in our knowledges? How are we drawing other knowledges into our disciplines? How are we aligning with or redirecting others? What relevant knowledges, assemblages, movements and pathways are emerging?

Symposium Theme

The concept was addressed in various ways through three types of contribution comprising the symposium programme.

- Firstly, an interactive keynote activity with Professor Anthony Ryan OBE (University of Sheffield), Dr Sria Chatterjee (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art) and Farhana Yamin (climate lawyer and activist) explored differences and complementarities of the arts and sciences in climate-related research.
- 21 research contributions were accepted for the symposium following an open call circulated throughout UAL earlier in the year. 15 research presentations were featured in three sessions themed 'territories of arts, sciences and other ecological knowledges', 'shifting the narrative' and 'redirecting systems and values.' Six further research contributions took creative forms within the symposium venue during the day – film screenings, artistic and material installations and a movement-based workshop. In terms of 'research', these demonstrated the diverse approaches that make UAL unique – from traditional academic research to practice research and research-based knowledge exchange.
- Culminating the day, a panel of UAL research leaders discussed how to build and sustain collaborative work across multiple sectors, heterogeneous stakeholders, and diverse communities.

This report overviews all these contributions to the symposium, including summaries of themes and discussions, abstracts and images from the researchers' contributions, links and biographies to all contributors. The report also includes some contextual and background information as well as our own reflections and evaluation of the symposium.

A key driver of the EARTH network is the need to better understand how we contribute to climate impacts. Many of us feel this need as a moral imperative and/or a political mission – it is also a strategic need for our university, research and innovation systems.

As a sector, the creative and cultural industries are globally significant, accounting for 3.1% of GDP and 6.2% of employment (UNESCO 2022, see also Mazzucato 2025). Despite the size of the sector, a recent UK report reveals scant and unevenly published research on climate impacts and initiatives as well as limited engagement with research funders around this agenda (PEC 2022).

By better understanding our contributions and engaging with others – through networks such as EARTH, our 2026 and future symposiums – we can impact sector-critical agendas such as decarbonization of our own operations, development of our skills, work and outputs in climate adaptation, resilience and justice, and shaping next generation and society-wide cultural shifts in attitudes and behaviours.

Authors:

EARTH co-convenors Dr Caterina Albano, Dr Lana Locke, Prof Ramia Mazé, Dr Francesco Mazzarella, Dr Catalina Mejía Moreno, Dr Yiğit Soncul Dr Niki Wallace and Prof Dilys Williams

- 1 Climate Emergency Network (2026) UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report. University of the Arts London. Available at: https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-Report-2-1.pdf
- 2 Mazzucato, M. (2025) The Public Value of Arts and Culture. UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/publications/2025/sep/public-value-arts-and-culture>
- 3 PEC Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (2022) Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency: The path to Net Zero. Available at: https://pec.ac.uk/research_report_enr/creative-industries-and-the-climate-emergency/
- 4 UNESCO (2022). Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good. UNESCO. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en>

UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines

The report “UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report” by the Climate Emergency Network should be read alongside this symposium report. Providing a vivid account of the whole week-long programme, the Fault Lines report introduces a timeline of climate action from 1970-2026, including the inception of the Climate Emergency Network in 2020...

“The Climate Emergency Network (CEN) emerged through a series of people’s assemblies organised in 2020 at University of the Arts London. A group of staff and students created CEN as a platform for channelling creativity into climate action, with a mission to foster a movement for change.”¹ (CEN 2026, page 7)

...and the five Earth Weeks produced by the network to date. It details how Earth Weeks brings UAL’s Strategy 2022-2032 to life, and there is a comprehensive evaluation of the 2026 Earth Week evidenced through extensive participant feedback collected during and after the programme activities.

“UAL’s first Earth Week was organized shortly after COP26 in Glasgow, when the language of net zero and climate justice was becoming more visible in public life. We had recently declared climate emergency and subsequently committed to becoming a net zero organisation by 2040. Over 5 Earth weeks, we have painted, moved, stitched, debated, danced, planted seeds, performed, watched, and challenged, redrawing lines of response and reimagining possible futures.



Collective Carving: Rooting4U, an alternative award ceremony during Appetite for Justice at CSM, Earth Day, 2022 | Photograph: Ana Blumenkron

Climate Emergency Network

By now, UAL Earth Week has platformed the practices of hundreds of staff and students, connecting their work with a growing community of concerned practitioners and professionals. However, throughout the past five years, the conditions around us have continued to shift.

For this year’s Earth Week, our intention was to recognise these pressures, facing the ways in which deepening uncertainties and inequities are reshaping our resolve and capacities within creative education and climate action. In programming Fault Lines, we intended to foreground the tensions that emerge between ambition and capacity, care and urgency, and practice and values in creative education. This year, the theme chosen for Earth Week was Fault Lines. It invited staff, students and partner organisations to reflect on the fractures and pressures shaping their lives, learning, practices and futures.”² (CEN 2026, page 5)

¹ Climate Emergency Network (2026) UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report. University of the Arts London. Available at: https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-Report-2-1.pdf

² Ibid.

UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines

‘Fault Lines’ as the 2026 Earth Week theme is articulated in terms of inspirations and objectives along with an overview of the programme and five case studies (including the ‘Lines of Flight’ symposium).

We celebrate the significant milestone of CEN – now formally recognised as a ‘staff network’ at UAL – which gives it a clear, visible and sustained place within the life and structure of the university. UAL staff can sign up to the CEN network and newsletter [here](#).

Report including source of quotations and the image:
Climate Emergency Network (2026) UAL Earth Week
2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report. University of the
Arts London. Available at: [https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/
assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-
Report-2-1.pdf](https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-Report-2-1.pdf)

Right: Snippet of printed Earth Week handout | Design: Alys Hargreaves

Climate Emergency Network

20.04.26
Central
Saint
Martins

**Ecotechnic-
metabolics:
prototyping
biosensors for
urban gardens
2 – 4pm**

**21.04.26
Camberwell,
Chelsea and
Wimbledon**

**Workshops from
the CCW Climate
and Repair
Advocates
12 – 5pm
Camberwell**

Polyester Protest
2 – 4pm
Studio Space,
Chelsea

23.04.26
London
College of
Communication

**Carbon Literacy
training course for
UAL students
9.30am - 3.30pm**

**Transformation
and challenge
in materials and
objects
1 – 2.30pm
CSM Materials
Library**

**Mini Orchard
Planting
1.30 – 2.30pm
Camberwell**

**Working With
Nature: A
Natural Materials
Workshop
2 – 3.30pm
Wimbledon**

**Fixing design's
existential crisis
with Phineas
Harper
6 – 7.30pm
Camberwell**

Samoota: EN1SE
2 – 3pm
Sceening Room,
Upper Gallery

The Carbon Walk

1 – 2pm

**CSM Swap Shop
x ReCreate UK:
Stretching the
life of exhibition
materials
1 – 3pm**

**Bio-ceramics:
shells as
biomaterials
1.30 – 3pm**

22.04.26
London
College of
Fashion

**Futuring a Garden
of Beehives at
1 – 2.30pm**

**Climate Art & the
Crises of AI +
Afterparty
6 – 7.30pm
LTC Lecture
Theatre + Dark
Room Bar**

**24.04.26
Doctoral
School**

**A Forest School
panel discussion
6 – 7.30pm
LVMH Lecture
Theatre (E003)**

**Earth Night with
the Climate
Emergency
Network
6.30 – 9pm
Platform Bar**

**Common Threads:
Accelerating
Circularity in the
Fashion Industry
6 – 7.30pm**

**Fibre Frequencies:
Spinning Fashion
Back to Land
1 – 2.30pm**

**See your Waste
Become Soil at the
LCC Community
Garden Launch
1 – 2.30pm**

**Lines of Flight: an
EARTH research
symposium
10am – 4.45pm
UAL High Holborn**

Symposium Programme

09.30	Film Screening: ‘Holding Rain in the Headwater’ (20min) Installations (in the venue all day) by Dr Henrietta Simson and by Nicci James and Dr Veronika Kapsali
10.00	Opening words by Prof Ramia Mazé Screening footnote by Dr Heather Barnett
10.15	KEYNOTES INTERACTIVE SESSION Session chair Dr Erika Hughes, Keynotes: Dr Sria Chatterjee (Head of Research Initiatives at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Director of Climate & Colonialism), Dr Anthony J Ryan OBE (Director of The Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures and Professor of Physical Chemistry, University of Sheffield), Farhana Yamin (Climate Lawyer, Author and Climate Justice Activist)
11.30	Break
11:50	SESSION 1 “Territories of arts, sciences and other ecological knowledges” Session Chair: Dr Yiğit Soncul, Presentations and discussion with Dr Pat Naldi, Jess Mountfield, Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes, Lu Wang, and Dr Donatella Barbieri
12.50	Lunch Film screenings: ‘Beach of Dreams 2025’ by Dr Fotios Begklis (20min, loop) and ‘Água Viva’ (18min, loop) by Jenny Maxwell

14.15	SESSIONS 2 “Shifting the narrative” Chair Dr Catalina Mejía Moreno, Presentations and discussion with Danielle Knight, Dr Andy Weir, Carlos Alberto Reyes Flórez, Karen Tang and Michelle Lin Braby 3 “Redirecting systems and values” Chair Dr Caterina Albano, Presentations and discussion with Dr Marketa Uhlirova, Dr Mila Burcikova, Hester Mauduit, Krista Evans, and Dr Zoi Zoupanou/Dr Arnab Banerjee/Gabriela Daniels/Dr Suraksha Gupta
15.15	Break Workshop: ‘NOSTOS: Migrating Bodies, Migrating Dances’ with Marianna Sfyridi
15.45	FINAL PANEL “Building and sustaining collaborative research” Panel chair: Prof Ramia Mazé, Panel discussion with Dr Amer Alwarea, Dr Regina Frei, Dr Kate Goldsworthy and Dr Alison Prendiville
16.40	Closing words by Dr Yiğit Soncul

Keynote Talks



The fishbowl format in action at the symposium | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Keynote Talks

The keynotes session used a “fishbowl” format, which created a more interactive space than a typical panel discussion or Q&A session. Fishbowls are intended to open up participation, blur the lines between the audience and invited speakers, and to co-create a space where engaging and generative conversations can take place. After the speakers presented, the interactive conversation began and our chair, Dr Erika Hughes, extended the invitation to anyone from the audience to join the discussion at any time, by momentarily occupying one of the empty seats to share their thoughts, or add questions or provocations into the mix. Each contribution prompted further discussion, and people moved freely into and out of the fishbowl, demonstrating active respect for one another and the space. In doing so, we co-created a different kind of keynote session where the possibility held by the ‘lines of flight’ theme became part of a more collective experience.

Keynotes chair: Dr Erika Hughes
CCW, Professor of Performance & Society
and CCW Associate Dean of Research
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<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/3312-erika-hughes>



Erika Hughes | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Professor Anthony J Ryan OBE, Director of The Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures and Professor of Physical Chemistry, University of Sheffield

Professor Anthony Ryan brought us into his world instantly using a story to illustrate a key difference in how the arts and humanities and the sciences pose questions. Tony framed this through the story of his first collaboration with artist Helen Storey (LCF, Professor in Fashion Science), whose deceptively simple question about whether packaging could “know” when it was empty illustrated the kinds of questions that scientists rarely ask but which can open up entirely new ways of thinking. This offered the audience an immediate entry point, demonstrating how we fill one another’s disciplinary gaps, whilst also providing a provocation about the nature of the materials we work with and the ways different values are assigned to their final forms.

Anthony held up the protagonists in question: in one hand a £10 note, and in the other, a piece of discarded food packaging. Same material, different value. He argued that plastics could become part of a fossil fuel-free future by acting as long-term carbon stores, but only if we can shift public and political perceptions of their value.

As his talk continued, he explored the nature of different plastic materials, their fossil fuel pasts and polluting futures, their politics and their potential, to ultimately arrive at a call to action — the need for storytelling in how carbon sequestration might utilise plastics in a fossil fuel free future. And in some sense, Anthony ended where he began, by revealing the power of storytelling and calling on the arts and humanities to help reshape the narratives that will determine how these materials are valued and how climate solutions are understood.

Professor Anthony J Ryan holds BSc and a PhD from the University of Manchester and a DSc from UMIST. In 1997 he moved to Sheffield and served as Head of Chemistry and Pro Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of Science. Anthony delivered the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures in 2002 and has an OBE for services to science. He leads the University of Sheffield’s Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures convening natural and social sciences, engineering, arts and humanities to focus on the global food, water and energy nexus. His personal research covers the synthesis, structure and processing of plastics, formulation of home and personal care products and materials for high intensity urban agriculture. The emphasis throughout is on understanding the fundamental science & technology in order to minimise resource use.

Dr Sria Chatterjee, Head of Research Initiatives at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Director of Climate & Colonialism

Dr Sria Chatterjee began her talk with a call for thinking historically and gave clear reasoning for this in the context of the climate crisis. Linking to Tony’s talk, Sria spoke to the geopolitics of plastics, making explicit that plastics waste is disposed of using the same trade routes that the British Empire established through its history of extraction. She described how “gutta-percha,” a latex obtained from trees grown primarily in Southeast Asia.

This material was once deemed economically and ecologically unsustainable as it was collected from forests by Indigenous people, however the need for such a material (a precursor to plastic) set into motion a vast colonial and market system. Today’s global communications and surveillance networks flow through fibre optic cables criss-crossing the oceans where gutta-percha cables were first placed for purposes of submarine telegraphy.

This story reveals how a particularly situated historical material remains entangled with modern technology, and how media, plastics, oil, and plantations all tie to colonialism.

Sria used this history to reveal the ways in which colonialism is reproduced today — even in the most well-meaning of activist spaces. She points to this as a major fault line; one which can be bridged by inter-disciplinary collaboration, but one which could be made more visible by the Arts. Sria finished her talk by reiterating this potential contribution from the arts, not as a supplement or in service of the sciences, but as part of an active coming together of the sciences and the arts, where history and ethics are central to how we respond to the climate crisis.

Dr Sria Chatterjee is an environmental humanities scholar and art historian. She is the Head of Research Initiatives at the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art in London. Sria specialises in the political ecologies of art and design from the colonial to the contemporary and leads the multi-year research project, Climate & Colonialism at the Paul Mellon Centre. In 2020, she founded and led the award-winning digital project, Visualizing the Virus, which showed the many inequalities pandemics make visible. She received her PhD from Princeton University and publishes widely in both academic and public-facing outlets. She has served as a judge for the Pen Hessel-Tiltman Prize for historical non-fiction and is a Trustee of Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery.

Farhana Yamin, Climate Lawyer, Author and Climate Justice Activist, former Visiting Professor at University of the Arts London)

Farhana Yamin's talk also began with a story, one of burnout, struggle and persistence in the face of an increasingly right-wing world, and she described how after multiple contributions in the forming and implementation of climate change treaties, the diluted Paris Agreement was made.

Her story was one of personal, political and professional grief, one of the realities of procedure and negotiation, but it is also one that reveals the ways different disciplines can contribute in processes from which they have been historically excluded.

In reflecting on decades of climate negotiations, she argued that science, law and economics had long dominated these spaces, while the arts and humanities offered ways of imagining futures, communicating values and creating forms of participation that policy alone could not achieve.

Farhana argued for the need for new rituals and ceremonies and for the practice of care and joy that might inspire policy makers who are otherwise exhausted and lacking ideas. She described how the co-creation of a village for the activists attending COP26 used a space where colonial histories were ever-present, but how this also became a space for acknowledging these histories, for practicing new rituals and a site for practicing healing. She also shared the ways artists at COP26 used light installations to reveal the words being deleted during negotiations, and in doing so demonstrated the impactful way the Arts can make visible what is otherwise being erased. She concluded by reflecting on the growing recognition of arts, culture and heritage within international climate policy, suggesting that these disciplines are no longer peripheral to climate action but increasingly recognised as essential partners in shaping its future.

Farhana Yamin is an international lawyer and climate justice activist who has advised vulnerable countries in UN climate talks for over 30 years attending nearly all of the UN Summits COPs since 1991. She played a key role in the negotiation of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol as well the 2015 Paris Agreement ensuring it contained the goal of net-zero emissions, an idea she put forward in 2013. She has founded or shaped several global coalitions and movements, including the Climate Vulnerable Forum, the Cartagena Dialogue, the High Ambition Coalition and Culture COP. Her work has earned her numerous accolades & awards, including being named No. 2 on the BBC's 2020 Power List, where judges described her as a "powerhouse of climate justice." In the last 5 years she has played a leading role in bringing together those working on arts, culture and the creative and heritage sectors, including founding CultureCOP and a number of pioneering arts-based interventions at climate summits. As Director of Impatience, she currently leads the Climate Justice and Just Transition Collective, helping philanthropy understand intersectionality & the need to shift power and resources to frontline communities. She is also a Richard von Weizsacker Fellow at the Bosch Academy, Berlin and an Honorary Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford.

Keynote Talks: Discussion

Each keynote talk added layers to the discussion that followed and, with storytelling featuring so consistently across each, this became an obvious jumping off point. In this first part of the discussion, Tony described how crucial linguistics are in storytelling — science and technology are one thing, but how people engage with these is what really matters.

He encouraged the audience to go and speak with scientists, to connect with them and form new collaborations. Sria echoed the need for the arts in terms of identifying Fault Lines and engaging with these historically, as this is the only way to understand the longer and deeper causes of today's multiple crises. The arts, she argued, play a critical role in communicating these.

Farhana wove across different communication stories, from the contested use of the colour red in the infamous 'burning embers' diagram through to the role played by creativity in the Extinction Rebellion (XR) movement's recreation of funerals and death marches. This part of the conversation highlighted the way the arts can move from spaces of activism through to acts of translation for politicians. As the discussion shifted towards the ways history can be mobilised for the benefit of a few, Farhana reminded us of that it is crucial to know your audience is, and she recalled her experience in negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol and how change was undone by fossil fuel lobbyists.

The discussion revealed how the first layer in this problem appears to be one of lobbying power, but looking at the history reveals how dependent on fossil fuels the global north has become, and how the energy transition is starting to shift this reliance to sources of wind and solar power. This in itself is a derailing of

fossil fuels that Farhana reminds us has a rebound effect associated with it — the backlash is palpable in their lobbying, but these are real alternatives that are proving their economic value too.

“This part of the conversation highlighted the way the arts can move from spaces of activism through to acts of translation for politicians.”

The discussion then turned to movements, and how real spaces and real connections are crucial ingredients, but not without disagreements, and Farhana reminded us how disagreements require safe spaces and processes, whether they are taking place within a movement or an institution. Tony articulated that using our academic freedom to pose critical questions is one way to operate within an institutional context, but finding ways to tell our stories in our way is another.

Farhana also reminded us that giving ourselves the space to grieve, the time to recover, and the option to pause and tend to ourselves is important, as is learning from Indigenous practices like community circles, where restorative justice can be practiced. It was clear that the ideas of change, of behaviours, of mindsets, and of politics, for Farhana were brought to life and made more possible through different practices that nurture different ways of being.

1 Climate Emergency Network (2026) UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report. University of the Arts London. Available at: https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-Report-2-1.pdf

UAL Research Contributions



1



2



3



4

A ‘call for presentations’ was issued by the co-convenors for the symposium, with many high-quality proposals submitted in response, spanning the diversity of UAL’s colleges, subject fields and modalities of research. A selection of the proposals was assembled into 3 themed sessions (panel presentations) and a parallel programme of screenings and other types of contributions. These are outlined below with links to learn more about the contributor and their work.

- 1 Session 2: Danielle Knight | Photograph: Angela Tozzi
- 2 Session 3 | Photograph: Angela Tozzi
- 3 Session 1: Dr Donatella Barbieri, Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes | Photograph: Angela Tozzi
- 4 Session 2: Karen Tang | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Session 1 Territories of arts, sciences and other ecological knowledges

This panel put into dialogue a range of contributions from UAL researchers across disciplines, methods and career stages, highlighting the breadth of approaches and positions relating to specific spaces, scales and territories within which ecological knowledge production may be situated. Pat and Jess's presentations focused on different locales in the Svalbard archipelago, exploring the intersections and frictions between artistic and scientific modes of making the climate crisis visible and knowable.

From there, Lucy and Lu shifted the register, navigated these scales through non-human figures of moss and silkworms, each opening up different ways of embodying and making ecologies. Donatella's paper closed the panel by turning to Yoruba traditions, performances and folktales, demonstrating a philosophy of inhabiting environments in a reciprocal and co-dependent way.

Session Chair: Dr Yiğit Soncul
LCC, Senior Lecturer in
Communications and Media
y.soncul@lcc.arts.ac.uk
<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/2828-yigit-soncul>

Presentations: Dr Pat Naldi, Jess Mountfield, Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes, Lu Wang, and Dr Donatella Barbieri



Dr Yiğit Soncul introducing Session 1 | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Session 1

Since 2022 I have undertaken three art and science field-research expeditions to the High Arctic Svalbard Archipelago. At only 500-miles south of the North Pole, Svalbard is warming seven times faster than the global average; it is ground zero of climate change. The Svalbard archipelago with 60% of its land covered by glaciers, is a place where global climate systems, colonial legacies, and geopolitical tensions intersect. While scientific study is driven by the urgent need to understand climate change and its effects, a question I continue to reflect on is what histories melt away unnoticed when we look at ice?

This talk will give an overview of my ongoing research in this region that has been shaped by extractive colonial practices, scientific erasure, and geopolitical power plays. A region where the climate crisis is now reactivating these dynamics in new forms, with melting glaciers as both a symbol and symptom.

Dr Pat Naldi

CSM, Lecturer, MA Fine Art

p.naldi@csm.arts.ac.uk

<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/709-pat-naldi/about>

End of Reference | Pat Naldi



Session 1

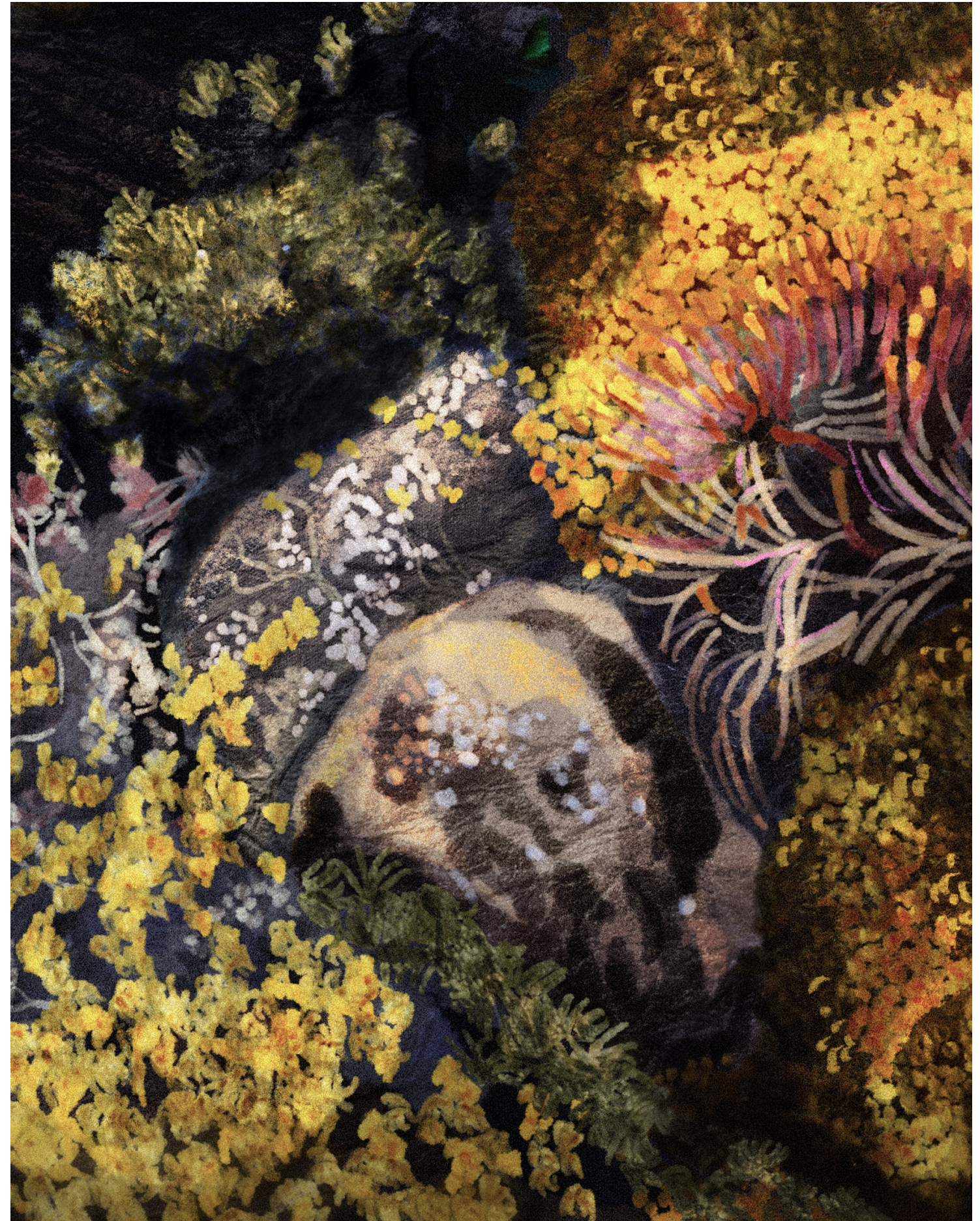
In the summers of 2024 and 2025, I lived in the High Arctic town of Longyearbyen, Svalbard. I spoke with fifteen scientists, from quaternary geologists to glacial microbiologists, about their work and their personal experiences of a landscape in flux. What emerged was a tension between professional and emotional registers: the difficulty of communicating urgency, against a backdrop of societal fatigue with the climate story. Complicating matters, Arctic imagery fixes the region in our minds as a frozen, timeless landscape, making change almost unimaginable.

This film asks whether a new kind of telling is possible. Weaving recorded conversations into a thematic tapestry, the scientists are placed in dialogue with each other. Hand-painted Arctic landscapes (drawn from intimate observation of lichen, rock, moss, and meltwater) accompany their words, with change embedded through the shifting paint. Moving away from iconic Arctic imagery and towards a personal lens of connection, this project asks: how might we better tell a story of changing place and time?

Jess Mountfield

LCC, Wimbledon College of Arts, Associate Lecturer in Animation, Lecturer in Development of the Storytelling Diploma
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Voices from the Arctic: Moss on Rock | Jess Mountfield



Session 1

The climate crisis is fuelled by extractivist logics which decimate habitats and species. Mosses have existed for over 300 million years and practice a different kind of knowledge in their interspecies relationships, thriving through rhizomatic communal exchange; cleaning air, re-knitting and building soil; holding water, mitigating flooding and soil erosion and creating microclimates where a diversity of life can flourish. Robin Wall Kimmerer suggests mosses could be a 'model of how we might live'. Through mosses we can open up other sensibilities and transform our understanding and awareness of our relationalities in the biosphere. 'Mossibilities' are ways of learning with mosses through transdisciplinary collaborative art practice. This includes developing a moss methodology, creating an artist-scientist field journal with microbial ecologist Dr. Ashish Malik (UoE) to document embodied and tacit ways of knowing, learning with Indigenous knowledges and I.N.S.E.C.T. Collective, co-creating speculative fiction, and practicing drawing as a multispecies way of knowing. Everyone is invited to draw/write/mark make, contributing to a collective mossibilities artwork documenting the moment.

Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes

CSM, Doctoral Student, Living Systems Lab

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Moss Universe | Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes



Session 1

What Is Meaningful to a Little Creature?

This talk explores silk beyond its familiar associations with economic value, luxury, and heritage. It asks what becomes visible when silk is reconsidered from the perspective of the silkworm and the ecological worlds that sustain it. Drawing on auto-ethnographic memories of raising silkworms, field encounters with sericulture practitioners in the Jiangnan region, and practice-based performance experiments, the research traces the hidden relations behind silk production: women's care labour, fertile land and water systems, mulberry cultivation, and the fragile lives of silkworms themselves. Particular attention is given to moments of deviation, silkworms escaping breeding trays or refusing to spin, which are read as minor "lines of flight" that unsettle extractive systems of value. Through costume-centred performance practice, the project proposes embodied and more-than-human ways of knowing, opening space to rethink ecological relations through attentiveness, vulnerability and care.

Lu Wang

LCF, Doctoral Student

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<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/3262-lu-wang>

Link to practice: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1phvsx5vmjBJpMTiSwfjhO2W7X40AFroc/view?usp=drive_link.

Lu Wang and Yu Ai Perform with Bamboo Cocoon during Earth Night, CSM | Photograph: Angela Tozzi



Session 1

With the Yoruba Tales collective, we created Whispering Forest previous iterations of which were at Horniman Museum and at Dancing City at East Bank, an immersive, hybrid, mixed reality, co-created and textile-performing, culturally situated performance. Based on Yoruba culture objects and working with diaspora and culturally situated textile design students, this project enacts, renders accessible, and projects the significance of collectively made textiles and performances identified by Bakare and Barbieri (2023) in Yoruba performance cultures. Exposing the ecocriticality of these neglected traditions involves Helen Epega (composer), Fumy Opeyemi (performer), and Toyin Gbomede (vocals). Experience designer Tosin Olufon and later Clémence Debaig ground the digital encounter, while Dr Kami Jones addresses audience engagement. Dr Babatunde Allen Bakare's transcriptions of these ancient tales evidence reciprocity and co-dependence, intrinsic to Yoruba philosophies. Constructing an equitable and accessible approach to making hybrid performance also exposes its potential for action in social and environmental justice through traditional dance, storytelling and textiles.

Dr Donatella Barbieri

LCF, Research Reader - Critical Costume Practices and Cultures
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Whispering Forest: Yoruba Tales Collective | Donatella Barbieri

Session 2 Shifting the narrative

This session brought together contributors that question and suggest working with methods such as speculative fiction, communication, geological cartographies, sculptural enquiries and student-led practice-based action. The contributors suggested how an active engagement with these can create desired futures and rethink the continuum of colonial histories and more-than-human agency.

Session Chair: Dr Catalina Mejía Moreno
CSM, Senior Lecturer in Climate Studies
<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/2092-catalina-mejia-moreno>

Presentations: Danielle Knight, Dr Andy Weir, Carlos Alberto Reyes Flórez, Karen Tang and Michelle Lin Braby



Dr Catalina Mejía Moreno | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Session 2

This session will introduce my use of the futures method of 'Causal Layered Analysis' (CLA) to research and write speculative fiction by investigating and unpacking unconscious metaphors and emergent systems and signals. Through a case-study, I show how climate-led instability in global industrial food supply chains, declining soil health and technological positivism can be reframed and explored to create desired futures through hyperlocal food growing.

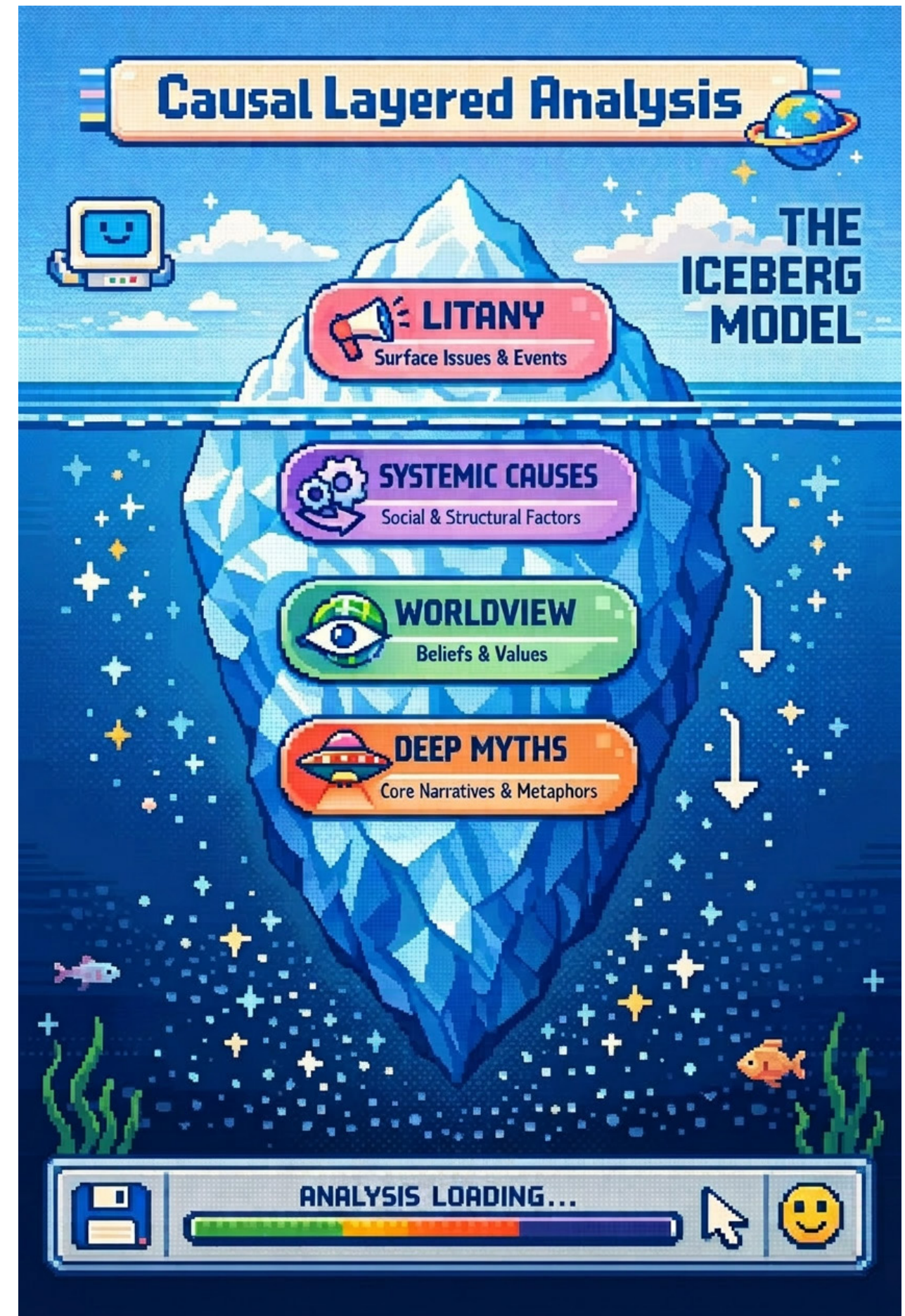
Danielle Knight

CSM, Knowledge Exchange Manager

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<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/2871-danielle-knight>

CLA iceberg concept | Sohail Inayatullah



Session 2

I present extracts of my Pazugoo art research. This is an intervention into the Nuclear Industry project of 'marking' sites of radioactive waste for long-term futures. Through a range of work, exhibitions, residencies and collaborations, I take a critical approach to some of the assumptions of this project, challenging 'communication' as a framework and asking how such 'markers' could be understood in a more radically ecological way. The work highlights the importance of speculative methods and fictions; underground diagrams connecting buried waste to planetary sites of extraction and toxicity, and rethinking the deep time continuum through colonial histories and more-than-human futures.

Dr Andy Weir
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Film still from research for Winged Rock Burial | Andy Weir



Session 2

Geological fault lines cannot be filled, cannot be stopped, cannot be closed. Any attempt, even imaginary, of doing so only exposes the most radical desires to control and shape nature, to tame the biggest forces on the planet through a fantasy where our anthropoephemerality could regulate the deep time processes that shape the earth's crust. The land we live on is because of fault lines. Fault lines expose what we otherwise would not have seen/been. Through a brief talk, I will present how my research embraces the materiality of the earth's geology as medium testifying to its own making. Caring by looking at the non-human. Specifically, by studying coal and sea salt from La Guajira, Colombia – and the contrasting approaches to their extraction – not merely as natural resources fuelling capital growth, but as materials that can simultaneously be wound and agents of care.

Carlos Alberto Reyes Flórez
CSM, Doctoral Student
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Carols Alberto Reyes Flórez | Photograph: Angela Tozzi



Session 2

What would it be like if we could understand the perspective, the 'umwelt', of cyanobacteria? Cyanobacteria are photosynthetic microorganisms that shaped Earth's biogeological evolution and are crucial in sustaining our biosphere. My PhD with CSM Living Systems Lab develops the notion of 'cyanobacterial gaze' as speculative method and practical sculptural inquiry.

My talk will be accompanied by sculptures and samples of living cyanobacteria, introducing why/how cyanobacteria are intrinsically sculptural - shapeshifting organisms that build extraordinary colonies and engineer ecosystems. I am shifting the narrative of artistic production by co-creating with cyanobacteria as living partners, learning from and emphasising their microbial agency. Furthermore, cyanobacteria offer significant potential for sustainable sculptural materials. Within More-Than-Human discourses, cyanobacteria are currently overlooked in favour of animals, plants and fungi; my practice seeks to redress this knowledge gap. Through art-science methods, I hope to raise awareness of cyanobacteria's resilience, innovation, adaptation, multispecies collaborations and ecological interconnectedness.

Karen Tang

CSM, Doctoral Student / UAL Foundation Senior Lecturer
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Knowledge from Nostoc | Karen Tang



Session 2

This session presents evidence from practice-based action research demonstrating how international students drive innovation in environmental education when positioned as genuine partners rather than passive feedback providers. Through the “Growing Concerns” collaborative exhibition project, Level 3 international students contributed diverse environmental knowledge systems that challenged institutional assumptions about climate visualisation, achieving 94.7% positive engagement and zero negative responses across quantitative measures.

The presentation examines how student voice methodology transformed from traditional module evaluation into co-created climate narratives, revealing four major themes: cultural responsiveness in pedagogy, methodological innovation beyond Western frameworks, scientific-artistic integration, and successful partnership outcomes. Attendees will explore practical strategies for culturally responsive workshop design, managing power dynamics in educator-researcher roles, and creating institutional structures that genuinely act on diverse student perspectives. The session offers replicable frameworks for quality enhancement through student partnership that respect cultural capital while addressing environmental justice in curriculum development.

Michelle Lin Braby
School of Pre-Degree Studies, Lime Grove, Curriculum Leader L3
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Growing Concerns 2 Poster | Vendash and Joeeun



Growing Concerns

26 May 2026 - 30 June 2026
Lime Grove Library

Co-creating #2

 CLIMATE NARRATIVES

 IDENTITY & INCLUSION

 POLITICAL CONCERNS

 CARE & WELLBEING

ual: school of pre-degree studies

Designed by Vedash and Joeeun

Session 3 Redirecting systems and values

This session brought together contributors from diverse areas of art and design to question systems, including means of production and critical frameworks underpinning them, from architecture and film to textile and cosmetics. The presentations offered critical perspectives and praxis that foreground ecological thinking, care and ethical making.



Session 3 presentations | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Session Chair: Dr Caterina Albano
CSM, Reader
<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/16-caterina-albano>

Presentations: Dr Marketa Uhlirova,
Dr Mila Burcikova, Hester Mauduit,
Krista Evans, and Dr Zoi Zoupanou/Dr
Arnab Banerjee/Gabriela Daniels/Dr
Suraksha Gupta

Session 3

Beyond the dirty laundry paradigm

My talk reflects on the Fashion in Film Festival season Grounded I co-curated in 2025 with Dal Chodha. It has become a common trope of documentary cinema to cast fashion as one of the planet's greatest villains – one that is nevertheless conveniently photogenic. While such portrayals are justified, they also direct awareness away from cinema and screen cultures' own material histories and environmental footprints, similarly rooted in industries of resource extraction and energy use. I will briefly highlight their relational ecologies and outline a wider array of cinematic paradigms for depicting fashion-nature ties while asking how materialities converge in cinematic images. Drawing on recent film and ecological theory, I will posit cinema as a reservoir of worlds in which seemingly impossible relations are rendered possible, at times prompting us to think and feel ourselves beyond anthropocentric narratives.

Dr Marketa Uhlirova

CSM, Reader in Fashion, Cinema and Visual Studies

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Dr Marketa Uhlirova, Session 3 presentations | Photograph: Angela Tozzi



Session 3

Life in Clothes – Almanac

What would fashion look like if it followed the rhythm of natural seasons rather than the market-driven seasons of the fashion calendar?

As part of my research on the connections between fashion making and farming practices, I've developed the Life in Clothes Almanac as a micro-scenario for a deeper understanding of fashion and agriculture at the smallest end of the scale – designer-maker practice and gardening. Taking inspiration from historical farmer's almanacs, I followed the flow of seasons in my studio and the gardens attached to it to explore how fashion centres and priorities are shifted when fashion is truly grounded in nature and a rural space.

The resulting artwork includes ten naturally dyed garments made from vintage linen + seasonal dye samplers; evocative photo documentation of nature's cycles as reflected in the process of design and making across the 10 micro-seasons identified through this research and the forthcoming full colour publication 'Life in Clothes Almanac: The seasons of garden and fashion making'.

Dr Mila Burcikova

LCF, Reader in Fashion Systems, Centre for Sustainable Fashion
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<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/1315-mila-burcikova>

Life in Clothes Almanac | Dr Mila Burcikova

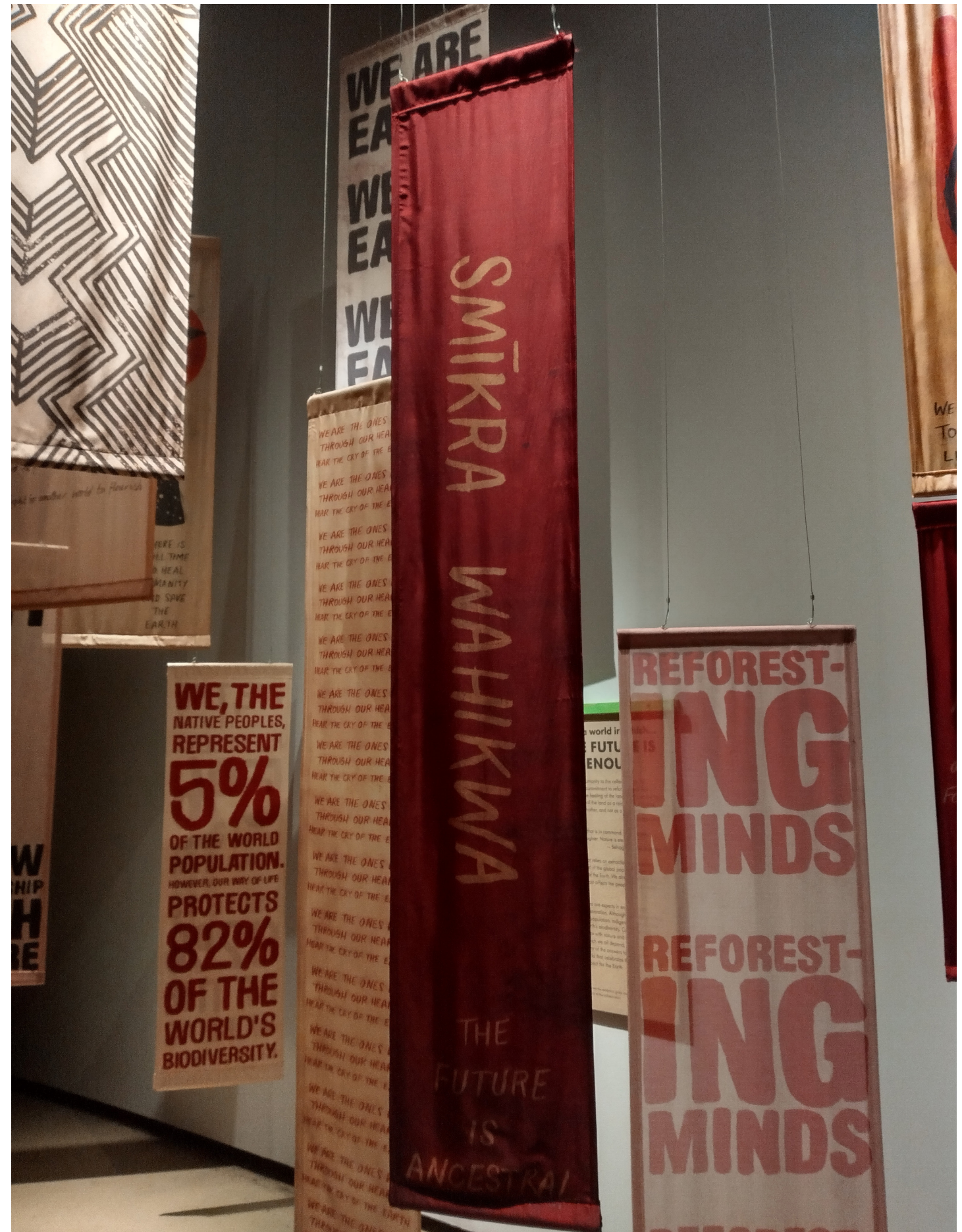


Session 3

How can curators and exhibition-makers contribute to socio-ecological well-being? How can they provide social, cultural and environmental care? What are their responsibilities towards future generations and how can they best fulfil those responsibilities? This presentation draws on initial findings from my doctoral research project, which investigates sustainable modes of exhibition-making in the UK and beyond. The aim of this talk is to reflect on curatorial responsibilities in the face of the climate crisis. Briefly surveying the different strands of thinking in the scholarship on curatorial practice, climate action and social responsibility, the presentation then weighs these ideas against museums' core function of "service to society" and the dialogue around sustainable practice in museums. Finally, the presentation advances some examples of recent curatorial practice in the UK which pioneer new modes of socio-ecological care and position museum exhibitions as care-giving and future-making agents

Hester Mauduit
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Installation view of Our Time on Earth at Barbican | Hester Mauduit



Session 3

How can the housing industry, in practice, learn from academia on how we value new homes? I have identified that value definitions are limited to exchange and social value within the new-build housing industry, which is a gap in the discipline. Drawing on other knowledge from academic discourse, my research examines the missing human-centric ways to define the value of what a home means to someone. This is important because the new build housing industry is not on track to significantly reduce its environmental impact within the timeframes set out in the latest IPPC report. My hypothesis is that this is due to the industry’s narrow, poorly defined concepts of value. Academic value definitions could expand how new housing is valued if it were to adopt more human-centric, environmentally focused definitions. This could help the industry meet urgent environmental targets.



Value Definitions | Krista Evans

Krista Evans
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Session 3

This research bridges the “green purchasing gap” by providing empirical, biometric evidence of how consumers process complex sustainability information in a high-pressure digital environment. By utilizing an eye-tracking methodology to isolate specific Areas of Interest (AOIs), the study moves beyond traditional self-reported surveys, which are often skewed by social desirability bias, to reveal the subconscious visual weight of ecolabels versus value claims. This approach validates the strategic importance of green innovation by demonstrating that high-reliability psychometric instruments can effectively measure the perceived alignment between brand actions and global sustainability goals. Furthermore, this research highlights how specific operational innovations such as waterless formulations, reef-safe ingredients, and circular packaging capture consumer attention and drive market satisfaction. With a robust data-driven blueprint useful for cosmetic brands and policymakers, it aims to find evidence about impact of transparent, third-party verified certifications as essential drivers of performance in the “clean beauty” sector.

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Dr Arnab Banerjee, LCF, Lecturer in Marketing Consumer Behaviour
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Gabriela Daniels, LCF, Programme Director Science
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Dr Suraksha Gupta, LCF, Professor of Marketing
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Research render | Zoupanou, Banerjee, Daniels, Gupta, Shamim



Creative contributions



1



2

- 1 **Film screening:** ‘Beach of Dreams 2025’ (20min) by Dr Fotios Begklis
- 2 **Installation:** ‘The Value of British Wool’ by Nicci James and Dr Veronika Kapsali
- 3 **Visual art** by Dr Henrietta Simson
- 4 **Workshop:** ‘NOSTOS: Migrating Bodies, Migrating Dances’ with Marianna Sfyridi
- Film screening:** ‘Holding Rain in the Headwater’ (20min) by Dr Heather Barnett
- Film screening:** ‘Água Viva’ (18min) by Jenny Maxwell



3



4

During the day of the symposium, there were several contributions that took the form of creative interventions rather than traditional presentations.

Creative contributions

Holding Rain in the Headwater is an art and environment educational residency involving students and staff from MA Art and Science, Central Saint Martins, working in partnership with Joya: AiR, contributing to a unique hydrorestoration project in the Spanish mountains.

Over 10 days in February 2024, students and staff from MA Art and science travelled to the driest part of Europe to help restore an ancient water capture system, sculpting the land by building check dams and planting native vegetation. Students also created artworks and interventions in and with the landscape of Almería. A documentary film, made by Nana Maiolini, exposes the layers of learning developed through the project, about climate, biodiversity, weather patterns, engineering, land management, botany, agriculture, cultural heritage, and collective creative action.

The project was organised by Heather Barnett (Central Saint Martins) and Simon and Donna Beckmann (Joya: AiR), supported by an LVMH Maison/0 Challenge Fund.

Watch the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdAl3bNcCWs&t=15s>

Dr Heather Barnett

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Holding Rain, Sculpting the Land | Photograph: Heather Barnett



Creative contributions

For centuries, linear perspective has functioned as a dominant technology of capture, producing an aesthetic and cartographic gaze that distances the observer and renders Earth a passive, extractable surface.

My work proposes a departure from this problematic framing, looking backwards to move forwards. Drawing from the pre-perspectival landscapes of late medieval painting, specifically the penitential wildernesses of the Italian early Renaissance, I am developing a visual language that rejects the horizontality of the singular perspectival subject and plots a new trajectory from the spiritual function of these historical wildernesses to the ecological and material complexities of the present. These early works suggest a blueprint for a visibility shaped by world-building; one that is haptic rather than scenic.

The works presented here are part of this process of loosening the normative visual structures of landscape, so that, rather than the static background to human action, it is shown instead as dynamic complexity.

Dr Henrietta Simson

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Chromium Blood | Photograph: Henrietta Simson

Creative contributions

UNUSUWUL examines a systemic rupture between the UK's landscapes, its agricultural heritage, and contemporary textile and fashion systems. Despite more than 20 million sheep across over 70 native breeds, British wool has been devalued to the point where farmers often make a loss on shearing, while the UK textile industry relies heavily on imported merino fibres from Australia and New Zealand. This fault line exposes tensions between globalised supply chains and place-based regenerative agriculture, and between sustainable design ambitions and the material realities of sourcing.

The presentation shares project findings through a short film and a showcase of textile prototypes developed from rare and native breed wool. By reconnecting fibre, farmer and designer, the session positions repair as a creative act restoring material knowledge, revaluing local resources, and inviting collective reflection on how these fractures might become sites of transformation.

Nicci James, CCW, Research Assistant /Specialist Technician L&T
Constructed Textiles Workshops & Studios (Knit)

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<https://www.unusuwul.co.uk>

Dr Veronika Kapsali, LCF, Professor of Materials Technology and
Design at the London College of Fashion

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<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/515-veronika-kapsali>

UNUSUWUL pieces from 'Creating Value for British Wool' Project. House Of Inspiration | Nicci James



Creative contributions

Beach of Dreams: A documentary exploration of UK coastal community creative action.

Beach of Dreams is a documentary and collaborative research project exploring the future of the UK coastline amidst the climate emergency. Originating as a UK-wide coastal arts festival, the project celebrated the UK's rich coastal heritage while providing a vital space to reflect, create, and imagine what our shores could become tomorrow.

Commissioned by the project's producer, Kinetika, this documentary focuses on the power of community engagement, creativity and art creation. The film explores how local coastal communities collaborate and unite, capturing their meaningful, grassroots responses to the environmental challenges threatening their way of life. Through local action and collective creative work, the film documents a coastline in transition and the resilient people fighting to protect it via collective artistic interventions.

Watch the film: <https://vimeo.com/1158090757/eb4bdf927a?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

Dr Fotios Begklis, LCC, Senior Lecturer
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Beach of Dreams | Dr Fotios Begklis



Creative contributions

Água Viva – Re/membering Breath in a Body of Concrete.

Returning to a site of abandonment, this experimental film seeks to expand Água Viva as 'linge de fuite' - a slippery, yet life affirming mode of research through which to explore the grief of uncertain times. In choosing to pay close attention to the things that are seemingly lost, broken and discarded this unsettled film invites the viewer to stay with the trouble; that which cannot be grasped.

Drawn from personal experience, it pulses from a gasp of devastation and re/turns, dripping through the cracks of an empty room. Drifting from the personal to collective via themes of decay and renewal, we sift through shattered and shifting grounds (on a journey to a lost house, in a forgotten village, from the sea to the mountains beyond) to awaken a topography of interconnected human and more-than-human relation. Relations that do not sit still.

Jenny Maxwell, CSM, Doctoral Student
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**Re:membering
Breath**

**in a
body
of concrete**

Remembering Breath | Jenny Maxwell

Creative contributions

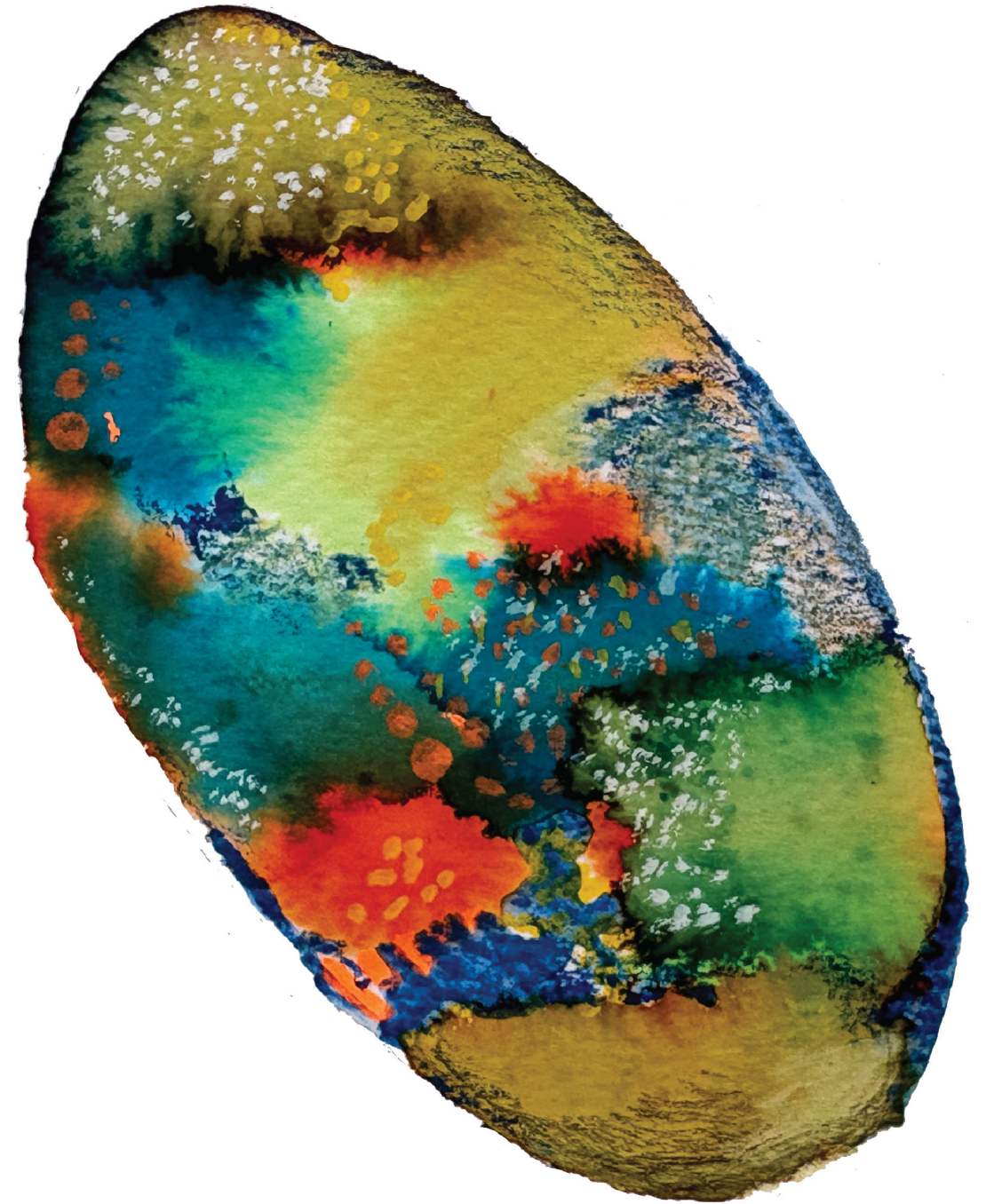
I share my short documentary NOSTOS, followed by a brief Circadian Bodies workshop. It is a practice-led research methodology that investigates choreography as an ecological practice aligned with circadian rhythms and environmental systems. Developed through research in dance, healthcare, and microbial life studies, with movements tasks that come from the film.

In the context of ecological crisis, much climate research remains cognitively framed or data-driven. Circadian Bodies responds by bringing forward bodily regulation as a form of ecological knowledge. The workshop-presentation will introduce key principles of the practice: including rhythm, oscillation, and environmental interaction, and invite participants into a short experiential task.

By situating movement as a site where human and more-than-human temporalities intersect, this work proposes choreography as an interdisciplinary interface capable of contributing to new forms of climate-responsive practice within the arts.

Marianna Sfyridi, CSM, Doctoral Student
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NOSTOS Migrating Bodies Migrating Dances



CSM NOSTOS, movement workshop poster | Marianna Sfyridi

| NEMA

Panel Building and sustaining collaborative research

The panel surfaced and discussed strategic aspects of doing and developing UAL's research and knowledge exchange (RKE) related to ecology, climate, environmental humanities, circularity and net zero. The panel discussed questions including: How to communicate and evidence the contributions of UAL's disciplines within RKE collaboration involving scientists, policy-makers and other expert knowledges far from our own? What are challenges in building and sustaining collaboration with other universities and stakeholder organizations beyond academia? What does it take for our research(ers) to secure and succeed in high-value transdisciplinary projects and funding bids?

Panel Chair: Dr Ramia Mazé
LCC, Professor of Design for Social Innovation & Sustainability
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Panellists: Dr Amer Alwarea, Dr Regina Frei, Dr Kate Goldsworthy, Dr Alison Prendiville



Dr Ramia Mazé introducing the Finale Panel | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Panellists



Dr Amer Alwarea speaking at the finale panel | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Dr Amer Alwarea is Associate Dean of Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise at University of the Arts London, working across Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts to connect academic practice with external partners across industry, policy, civic organisations and the public sector. His work focuses on inclusive place-based innovation, creative economies, cultural enterprise and the role of arts and design in social and economic transformation.

Before joining UAL, Amer held senior research and innovation roles at the University for the Creative Arts, where he led cross-sector RKE partnerships and contributed to regional creative innovation programmes, including UCA's role in the Games Innovation Nexus (£2.4 million). He worked with UCL and the Place Alliance, contributing to research and knowledge exchange on place quality, housing design and the public value of better places. This work helped shape his wider interest in how universities can build evidence-led collaborations that connect research, policy, communities and practice.

Dr Amer Alwarea

CCW, Associate Dean of Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise
<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/3445-amer-alwarea>

Can you share a specific example from your own collaborative RKE?

“One example from my own RKE practice was leading UCA's contribution to the Games Innovation Nexus (GAIN) before moving to UAL. GAIN brought together the University of Surrey, UCA and the University of Warwick to connect the Guildford and Leamington/Silicon Spa games clusters, with industry and civic partners including local authorities and sector bodies. The challenge was not simply securing collaboration, but sustaining it across institutions with different academic cultures, commercial expectations, geographies and delivery pressures.

At UCA, our role was to position games not only as a technical or entertainment sector, but as a creative innovation ecosystem linked to CreaTech, graduate enterprise, incubation and regional growth. A key lesson was that collaboration needs more than shared ambition: it needs clear governance, visible mutual benefit, practical delivery mechanisms, and trusted “translation” between universities, SMEs, councils and industry. GAIN showed the value of building a shared platform while still allowing each university to contribute from its distinctive strengths.”

<https://surrey-research-park.com/gain/>
<https://gain.uca.ac.uk/>

Panellists



Dr Regina Frei speaking at the finale panel | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Dr Regina Frei

LCF, Professor of Sustainable and Circular Systems at the Institute for Fashion, Textiles and Technology (from June 2026: Fashion Business School), and Director of the Product Returns Research Group

<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/3158-regina-frei>

Dr Regina Frei's main interests are sustainable value chains and the Circular Economy, with a special focus on product returns in multichannel retail. She was with Surrey Business School from March 2023 to June 2024 as an Associate Professor of Digital Economy and a Fellow of the Institute for Sustainability. From September 2019 to March 2023, Regina was with Southampton Business School as an Associate Professor of Operations and Supply Chain Management. She launched and led the MSc Strategic Operations and Supply Chain Management and had it accredited by CIPS UK and CILT UK. Regina also created and continues leading the Product Returns Research Group, and interdisciplinary and industry-oriented team of academics from various universities.

From 2013 to 2019, Regina was a Senior Lecturer in Manufacturing Engineering and Supply Chain Management at the University of Portsmouth, UK. Previously, she was a Postdoc at Cranfield University and Imperial College London. She holds a PhD in Distributed Robotics from Universidade Nova, Lisbon, Portugal, and an MSc in Micro-Engineering from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland. She wrote her MSc Thesis at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden, and did internships with the International Watch Company (IWC) and Schindler Lifts, both in Switzerland.

Can you share a specific example from your own collaborative RKE?

“I created the Product Returns Research Group (PRRG) almost 10 years ago, based on an initial research project funded by an association of retailers. Members and their affiliations have varied over the years, with key participants now at Cardiff University, the University of Surrey, and the University of Exeter. We engage with a variety of stakeholders, including brands, retailers, supply chain partners, logistics companies, resellers and traders, industry bodies, policymakers, NGOs, consumers, and the media. A key element is attracting funding. Over the years, we have applied for grants from various funders, including the ESRC, EPSRC, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, the Wellcome Trust, the Royal Society, retailer associations, and others.

Product returns involve various disciplines and stakeholders, who often have different views and opinions. One of the key challenges is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration, that is working across disciplines and with different types of stakeholders. It is important to agree on a shared language, set joint goals, and embark on a joint action programme. It is also important to be prepared for dealing with conflicts, as they are certain to arise.”

<https://reginafrei.wixsite.com/website/product-returns>

Panellists

Dr Kate Goldsworthy is Chair of Circular Design & Innovation and Director of the Future Denim Lab based at Central Saint Martins. She also leads the University of the Arts London Innovation Lab.

Kate joined UAL initially as a Masters student in 1997 and after a period in industry returned in 2005 to undertake doctoral research. Her practice-based PhD 'Laser finishing: a new process for designing recyclability in synthetic textiles' (2012), re-imagined the way we could manufacture and re-manufacture textiles with a focus on 'industrial ecology' and 'life-cycle design', enabling continuous cycles of future recycling.

Kate is a member of the EPSRC Strategic Advisory Team and UKRI peer review colleges for EPSRC, AHRC and BBSRC, and also advise on policy groups and industry boards, including a current seat on the ZDHC Foundation Advisory Board. Her creative work has been exhibited & collected internationally. and commissions include The Science Museum, The V&A and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

Dr Kate Goldsworthy

CSM, Chair of Circular Design & Innovation, Director of Future Denim Lab

<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/380-kate-goldsworthy>

Dr Kate Goldsworthy speaking at the finale panel | Photograph: Angela Tozzi



Panellists

Dr Alison Prendiville is Professor of Service Design at LCC University of the Arts London. She works at the intersections of science and technology innovation with a focus on open, participatory, equitable and socially responsive co-design processes, particularly around service transformation with communities and experts in human and animal health settings.

Her primary research is informed through design anthropology, whilst also incorporating related systemic design approaches to map and locate interventions to co-design and prototype solutions with communities. Her most recent work has been focused on AMR in nursing practice ecologies in the UK and in the development of user driven diagnostics for three settings in India, under a One-Health approach. She has a keen interest in understanding the contribution of design as a means of co-creating and translating knowledge between diverse actors, particularly when dealing with complex societal challenges.

Her work has been published in many books and journals, notably, In 2017, she edited with Daniela Sangiorgi 'Designing for Service: Key Issues and New Directions', published by Bloomsbury. Her work has informed policy and she is an advisor to research panels nationally and internationally.

Dr Alison Prendiville

LCC, Professor of Service Design

<https://researchers.arts.ac.uk/792-alison-prendiville>

Dr Alison Prendiville speaking at the finale panel | Photograph: Angela Tozzi



Symposium Evaluation



Attendees at Lines of Flight | Photograph: Angela Tozzi

Symposium Evaluation

Feedback about the symposium was gathered from participants in various ways. Attendance was tracked via Eventbrite registrations and our own lists of in-person and online attendance. Cards distributed mid-way and at the end of day with a QR code generated 14 responses to quantitative and qualitative questions. In the week following the symposium, an online survey was sent to the Eventbrite registration list resulting in 25 further responses. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with a small, representative sample of participants (a doctoral researcher and staff from different career stages and ‘job families’). The overwhelming response was positive, including a number of key learnings and insights, as summarised below.

The EARTH research symposium attracted the most Eventbrite registrations (179) of any event during UAL’s Earth Week 2026 (the week-long programme across six colleges produced by the Climate Emergency Network comprised 23 activities with a total 875 Eventbrite registrations, see CEN 2026). This suggests a strong appetite for UAL-led research discourse on climate-related topics.

On the day of the symposium, public transport strikes unfortunately led to some cancellations and shifts from in-person to online attendance. Ultimately, there were 75 attendees in person and online, and the majority of these were UAL staff (41%). In addition, there were UAL undergraduates, postgraduates and alumni (11%), and UAL doctoral researchers (11%). Notably, 30% came from outside UAL – from various companies, organizations and universities – a significant rise on 15% external attendees at our inaugural symposium during UAL’s Earth Week in 2025.

“The energising keynotes changed my perspective on the value of humanities research and artistic practice in the climate space.”

– Anonymous Earth Week Feedback

Feedback from cards during the symposium day provided insightful and constructive feedback. In terms of helping attendees to explore climate-relevant ideas and concepts in depth, the median score was four out of five (with five being the highest possible score). Survey respondents highlighted that the symposium aided them in developing knowledge and skills for own future development, with the median score being four out of five. In terms of extending own networks and community, the median score was five out of five.

“Seeing the diversity of research approaches in this space is really helpful.”

– Anonymous Earth Week Feedback

The cards also provided qualitative feedback to a number of questions. In terms of ‘take-aways’, several responses about the social and developmental impacts of the symposium included: a feeling of being part of an important community, that sharing action matters (no matter how small the action is), the importance and power of community that crosses disciplinary boundaries, the necessity of talking to one another across disciplines and differences, and a sense of joy (within the struggle). Further answers to this question focused on symposium content, including: the diversity, breadth and depth of ecological research across UAL, better understanding of how creative actions can contribute to addressing climate issues, the range of perspectives (several specific mentions of the keynotes), and appreciation for the in-depth and diverse coverage of postgraduate research topics. One sharp comment was made concerning the (internal and external) consequences of UAL potentially backsliding on climate commitments.

The post-symposium survey posed questions about Earth Week as a whole and specific feedback about the symposium. To the question, “What part of Earth Week made the biggest impact on you?”, six staff respondents named the symposium. Specifically, they highlighted the symposium as an opportunity to explore new perspectives on their own research, to generate ideas for new research, and – several mentions – to meet and network with people from across all colleges working on related ideas.

“That cross-cutting momentum is a completely different kind of activism that escapes the college silos”

– Anonymous Earth Week feedback

Several useful insights and learnings were prompted by the survey question, “Is there anything about Earth Week you think we should change or do differently?” Two staff members would like some more hands-on sessions or to see the practical side of climate-related work, and another advocated for being realistic without losing creativity and originality. While one respondent thought the symposium was generally too academic, the above staff members seemed to want more in-depth unfolding of doing research.

The ambition and content of the symposium was commended in two responses, with a suggestion of spreading it over two days instead. There was a suggestion that deeper-dives into specific projects could be done via posters or an exhibition. Two responses reprised points received in previous Earth Weeks, e.g., to plan the activities into the curriculum and much further in advance, so that staff and students could engage more fully.

In terms of reflections among us co-convenors, we shared a number of positive own experiences that echo that of other participants above. Also echoing several negative comments received regarding practicalities, we recognize the sometimes-severe problems with the audio/visual and livestream technical systems that we were only partially able to remedy during the day. These problems did impact the content of some sessions and contributors, which we very much regret. To these and many other organizational learning points, over six months we have initiated, co-created and developed (in a convenors’ handbook) a number of organizational, event production and communications practices that we’ll take into our future EARTH events – stay tuned!

“Having that spectrum from individual curiosity through to strategic funded research was really interesting.”

– Anonymous Earth Week Feedback

“One of the researchers and I are talking about co-developing a bid on a mutual research interest.”

– Anonymous Earth Week Feedback

Reference: Climate Emergency Network (2026) UAL Earth Week 2026: Fault Lines Evaluation Report. University of the Arts London. Available at: https://www.arts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/606937/UAL-2026-Earth-Week-Report-2-1.pdf

About the EARTH network

EARTH (Ecological Arts Research Transdisciplinary Hive) is a network of researchers spanning colleges, disciplines and career stages at the University of the Arts London (UAL). UAL is a teaching-intensive monotechnic increasingly recognised for its innovative research and knowledge exchange activity. UAL is ranked second in the world for Art and Design in the QS rankings. Spanning art, architecture, communication, creative computing, culture, design, education, fashion, media, music, performance, photography and screen, research and knowledge exchange activities are delivered through our six London-based Colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion, and Wimbledon College of Arts.

Aims and activities of the EARTH network

- 1 Aim 1: To surface, connect and showcase our relevant research and research-based KE
- 2 Aim 2: To profile relevant RKE for bid development, external profiling and collaboration
- 3 Aim 3: To foster researcher development and cultivating a dynamic research environment

EARTH 2024-26 activities to date include:

4 UAL researcher gatherings (aim 1, aim 3)

- 25 April 2024 hybrid at High Holborn: Network start-up gathering
- 21 November 2024 online: Mapping research topics
- 20 November 2025 at LCC: Reflections on COP30

5 Research symposia (aim 1, aim 2, aim 3)

- 25 April 2025: Ecological knowing, sensing, storytelling
- 24 April 2026: Lines of Flight

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Mossibilities Collaborative Artwork | Lucy Jane MacAllister Dukes

