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# Urgent Enquiry What do artists do?

Chris Fremantle

# Who am I?

Chair of Art Focus Group for  
Ramsar Convention's Culture Network

Editor Producer for ecoartscotland  
<http://ecoartscotland.net>

Member international ecoart network

Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer,  
Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon  
University, Aberdeen

Work across ecology and health

Glen Onwin: Saltmarsh, 1974

# Simon Read: Saltmarsh

“In 2009, I developed the first of what has now become a series of projects upon the intertidal zone, to build a structure to attenuate wave and tidal energy and the effects of scour on a 2.5 ha saltmarsh site at Sutton on the River Deben in Suffolk.”





1 hr after HW there  
will be a point of  
maximum turbulence  
midway between  
heads



# Saltmarsh

Geologic data suggest that the tipping point between modern delta resilience and collapse will likely occur in the next 50 years as the RSLR reaches between 5 and 10 mm y<sup>-1</sup>. These changes to the existing coastal geomorphology will have regional, national, and international repercussions, occur nearly concurrently, and will compromise existing trade networks, settlements, and ecosystems.

Turner, R.E., M.S. Kearney, and R.W. Parkinson  
2018. 'Sea level rise tipping point of delta survival'.  
*Journal Coastal Research*



**Table 1****Dimensions of climate change transformations processes possibly accessible through the arts.**

Dimensions	Potential role of the arts	References
Creative imagination and serendipity	Potential to create spaces for active experimentation and imagination, fostering creative thinking. Serendipity is an integral part of emergent and resilient responses	[21]
Dealing with difficult emotions and dilemmas	Create safe spaces of disclosure and sharing	[38,49,50]
Engaging storytelling	Narratives combine cognitive with emotional resources in the depiction of specific experiences, offering increased comprehension, interest and engagement of audiences	[51]
Science communication	Enrich narrative, visual and experiential aspects of communication and extend its reach	[52,53]
Possibilities for political engagement	Hybrid experiences that bring together art, science and climate change can be fertile ground for collective action by creating sites of encounter, public scrutiny, meaning negotiation and trust	[54**]
Exploring futures imaginatively	Develop metaphors, imagery and narratives of alternative futures	[55]
Pre-figuring potential futures through direct action	Develop and perform direct intervention, experimentation and re-designing in daily situations and social systems	[56]
Engaging with values and beliefs	Unveil values and beliefs behind action and perception, connecting with personal and collective drivers of action	[36]
As part of transdisciplinary learning processes of knowledge integration	Artists as active participants of a transdisciplinary process integrating multiple learning and processes and involving multiple ways of knowing	[56,57]
Shifting awareness and openness to more-than-human worlds	The arts may provide access to different sources of cognitive, emotional and sensual experience, opening up sensibilities to extended ecologies and more-than-human worlds	[58,59*]
Coupling cultural systems with social-ecological change	Art can reveal materially and directly what is happening in social-ecological systems which may lead to the attuning of human perception, value systems and worldviews to changes in the biosphere	[6,60]
Embracing social-ecological complexity	Art embraces uncertainty and tends to trace the ways in which society and nature are intertwined. This approach may open up alternative modes of relations to nature beyond 'command-and-control'	[21,61]

Source: Author

Galafassi, D. (2017) 'Raising the temperature: the arts in a warming planet' Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability



# Ecosystem Services

Supporting services – services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services including soil formation, photosynthesis, water cycle, nutrient cycling

Provisioning services – products obtained from ecosystems, including food, fuel, timber, medicines

Regulating services – benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes, including climate regulation, water purification, flood prevention, air quality regulation, pollination

Cultural services – non-material benefits people obtain through spiritual enrichment, recreation, aesthetic experiences, tourism

# Examples

New Stobhill Hospital

Common Ground

Joseph Beuys

Anne Marie Culhane and Ruth Levene

Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton  
Harrison

Collins and Goto Studio

Aviva Rahmani

# NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde New Stobhill Hospital

**A Grove of Larch  
in a Forest of Birch**

Reiach & Hall Architects  
Thomas A Clark  
with  
Ken Dingwall  
Andreas Karl Schulze  
Olwen Shone  
Donald Urquhart





A PLACE APART  
HAVING THE BRIGHTNESS AND STILLNESS  
OF A WOODLAND GLADE







# Common Ground

“Common Ground was founded in 1983 by Sue Clifford, Angela King and the writer Roger Deakin to seek imaginative ways to engage people with their local environment. The idea of Local Distinctiveness is at the heart of everything we do, ...”





# A Manifesto for Fields

## Common Ground

### 1. Fields should have names not numbers.

The names of particular fields may have remained the same for centuries or have altered over time as the fields have changed size or ownership. They may describe prominent features, the soil, wild life, vegetation, tell us the name of the landholder, or how to work the land, if only we can translate them.

- Edit...
- Upload...
- Save...
- Save as PDF...
- Print...
- Copy to Clipboard...
- E-Mail...
- Open in external Editor...

1. Fields should have names not numbers.
2. Fields should be enclosed by boundaries of the local idiom.
4. Fields should embody history as well as present day uses.
5. Wildlife should be at home in fields.
6. Give them a rest – let the fields lie fallow.
10. We need more community fields where people can walk and play.
13. Seasonal festivities should be enjoyed in fields.
41. Fields should feast our imaginations.

[www.commonground.org.uk/manifesto/](http://www.commonground.org.uk/manifesto/)

# Joseph Beuys

7000 Oaks, 1982



Joseph Beuys and Lucrezia De Domizio Durini, Photo: Bubi Durini

# A Field of Wheat

Anne Marie  
Culhane,  
Ruth Levene,  
40 others



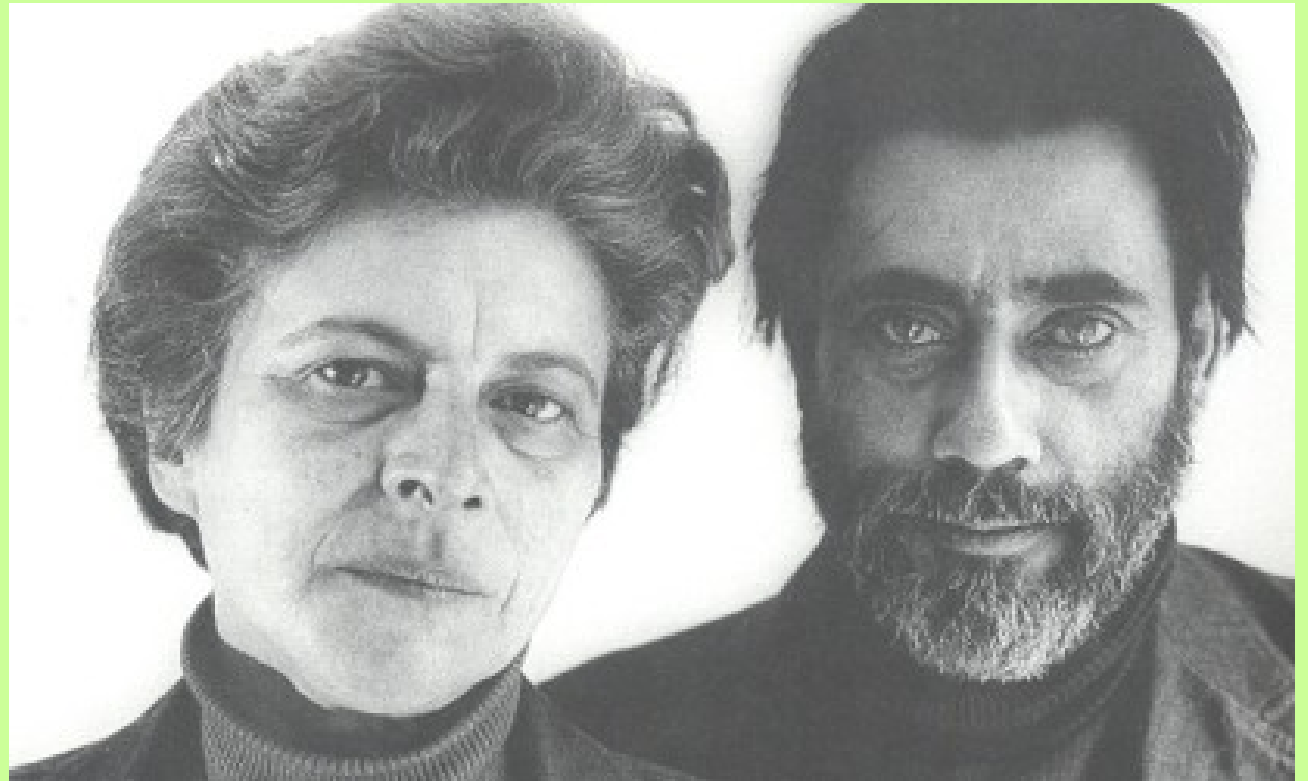




55  
CORN  
EXCHANGE

# Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison

- From early 1970s committed to do no work that did not in some way benefit the lifeweb
- Developed a practice that speaks for the lifeweb
- Where the ecosystem was seen to be other, they represented humans as within (and not at the centre)
- They ask,  
How big is here? and  
How long is now? and  
Can we put back more than we take out?





The moment is urgent if business as usual continues Scotland as usual will continue to have a carbon footprint over three times its physical size to do absolutely nothing risks the death of the Lifeweb to do too little risks near death and a sixth extinction to do enough we cannot know without the doing of it

The wealth of the country is in its aquatic commons, especially the rainfall about 113 cubic kilometers fall a year on average on these lands of this about 80 cubic kilometers of are estimated as run off, if 40 cubic kilometers or 40 billion cubic meters are captured and redirected into an array of estuarial lagoons or catchment basins or into drought ridden farming areas

Then the redirection is expressed in new food that is produced and the cost of flood control decreases, while the biodiversity in the country increases So increases the deep wealth of the nation

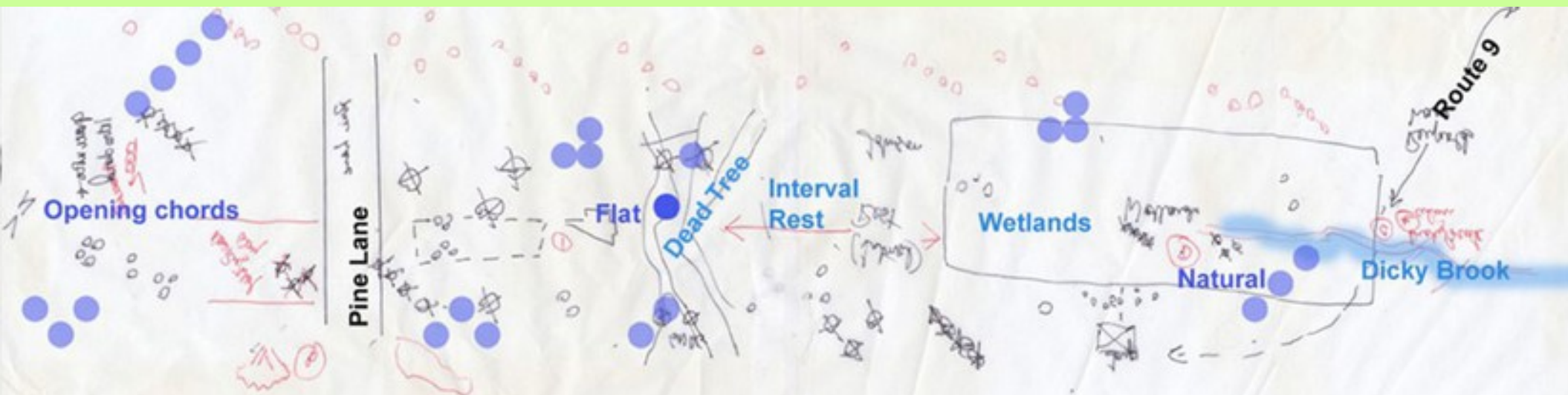


# Collins and Goto Future Forest





# Aviva Rahmani, Blued Trees Symphony









# On being useful

- Creating cultural value for human environments
- Creating or rediscovering cultural value of ecologies
- Creating new cultural and ecological value by augmenting ecological systems
- Creating new ways of understanding ecological systems
- Using human systems to protect or strengthen ecological systems

# Links and References

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