

Art in Ecology – A Think Tank on Arts and Sustainability

Summary Report

Vancouver, April 27, 2006
Roundhouse Community Centre

Organized by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Vancouver Foundation and the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (London UK)

A Summary Report by Lorna Brown

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For more information: claudio.schryer@canadacouncil.ca

Introduction

(Based on the invitation document to the April 27th 2006 Think Tank)

It is becoming daily more apparent that the environment is in crisis and the reality and threat of worsening climate change, loss of biodiversity and habitat, and the over-exploitation of the Earth's natural resources give the subject of the human and natural environment an unprecedented importance and urgency.

Artists in all times have celebrated and inquired into the human and natural environment. While some artists find inspiration in their surroundings, some environmentalists and ecologists turn to art to convey their messages with impact and with the goal of reaching larger audiences. Artists also, in the interests of engaging issues of critical import, have transgressed the boundaries of disciplines and initiated radical shifts in practice. With the development of modern technologies, collaborations have become more frequent, with mixed results – some projects that were highly effective, some less so.

An important body of work exists in this field (such as land art, eco-art, soundscape studies, urban design, community arts, bio-art, etc.) as witnessed by information-gathering organizations such as the Green Museum (www.greenmuseum.org).

Canada has a rich history of collaboration and achievement in the field of Art and Ecology. However, gaps remain in the development and understanding of these practices. Ecological issues are global as well as local, making it necessary to explore what could be achieved nationally as well as internationally.

The purpose of *Art in Ecology – A Think Tank on Arts and Sustainability* was to invite a group of art and ecology experts to consolidate current knowledge in this field, and to envision future directions. The session was initiated to seek feedback about the intersection of the arts and sciences sectors, to receive input regarding possible new programs, and to discuss partnerships. The objective of the think tank was to better understand barriers to collaboration in art and ecology, and to define areas of future action for partnership development, funding strategies, and sustainability.

The think tank was also an opportunity to receive a presentation by Michaela Crimmin on her work with the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (RSA), UK, to explore how improved collaboration between artists and ecologists may contribute to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and to consider a group of questions distributed to participants as part of their invitation to attend.

Opening thoughts by co-chairs Claude Schryer (Canada Council for the Arts) and Mauro Vescera (Vancouver Foundation)

Claude Schryer and Mauro Vescera outlined that they have thinking about organizing this think tank on art and ecology for many years and that Claude's visit to London in July 2005 was the catalyst for this international collaboration. They spoke of their shared interest in cross-sectoral work and the need for closer collaboration across disciplinary boundaries.

Beth Carruthers' *Mapping the Terrain of contemporary EcoArt practice and collaboration*

A background paper by Beth Carruthers was commissioned to set the tone and serve as a basis for discussion. Introducing her research paper, Ms. Carruthers explained that it sought to provide references to some existing projects in Eco Art but was not a comprehensive study of a very diverse and ever-changing body of practice. Included were indications of the origins of the practice and sample projects. She commented on the need for more communication and dialogue between scientific and artistic practices in order to encourage meaningful collaboration. She commended the level of passion and dedication demonstrated by the projects, which included such diverse approaches as restoration projects, celebration works and community initiatives. Stemming from her research, certain questions remain regarding where this body of practice will be situated within cultural theory, whether or not it will formulate its own theoretical base, and, if it were less marginalized in comparison to other art forms, whether collaborations with greater impact be possible.

Michaela Crimmin and the RSA Art and Ecology Program (UK)

In presenting her work with the RSA, Ms. Crimmin first introduced the organization, established some 250 years ago, with a current interest in societal change and a multi-disciplinary approach that aims to open doors between disciplines.

Her program addresses the RSA objectives of 'moving towards a zero-waste society' and 'advancing global citizenship'. With a background in art practice and curation, Ms. Crimmin expressed a belief in maintaining a respect for specialisms but not for disciplinary silos. Work in the public domain, while promising, offers few existing examples that demonstrate the 'hard' artistic standards that should apply to projects on either side of the gallery wall. In this complex territory, ecological issues need the attention of the best minds from all disciplines including economists and business owners as well as scientists and artists. The gallery world, and its resources, needs to be brought into this discussion, and made more aware of environmental issues.

Ms. Crimmin outlined the preliminary objectives of the RSA Art and Ecology Program:

- Develop an understanding of ecological issues, of current arts practice and of the possibilities at the point where arts and ecology connect.
- Develop partnerships and potential partnerships.
- Develop a network, a database, a modest website and produce a publication which explores and raises the issues we are examining.
- Conduct 'open research' through dialogue, lectures, events and projects.
- Begin to raise awareness of environmental challenges, leading to a shift in behaviors.

In aiming to address such large issues, it was key to develop a program with a high impact. This required partnerships with well-established agencies and individuals, such as the Arts Council London, the Director of the Tate, and the Chief Scientific Adviser for government, Sir David King, in order to secure impact, and development funding for open research to identify issues and investigate terms. The program also required a good marketing strategy to attract publicity and broaden awareness.

An exploratory series of events is taking place, based around dialogue with philosophers, economists, geographers, social psychologists, researchers, designers and others – with artists in the open spaces between. These lectures, symposia & conferences include:

- Launch Event: April 2005, RSA London
- Ecology and Artistic Practice: April 2005, RSA London
- Towards an Eco-cinema: September 2005, Bristol
- On the Page: October 2005, Cheltenham Literature Festival, Cheltenham
- Landscape Institute Lecture With Walter Hood: May 2006, RSA London
- Culture & Business Seminar: June 2006, Newcastle
- Green Buildings / Aesthetic Design: Autumn 2006, London
- Adaptable Eco-systems: December 2006, LSE London (a major international two day conference to mark the beginning of the next stage of the program)

In sessions on screen based work with artists and environmentalists, candid conversations explored the conflicts between the sectors regarding the role and function of art in generating social change, and the pitfalls of instrumentalizing art practice.

Ms. Crimmin presented several projects by artists who had not previously worked with ecological issues. These include Alfredo Jaar's project for a small logging community in Sweden; Henrik Hakansson's concert with a (silent) bird, *Darwin's Nightmare* which looks at the effects of introducing foreign fish species to Tanzanian rivers, underwater cinema works that document the seasons, Ruth Padel's fictional writing and Mark Lynas' anecdotal journalism. Using a range of artistic techniques, and coming from many artistic disciplines, these works are

compelling, but are not pedagogic. They can use time-based media to slow down the viewer in a fast moving culture; stimulate the attachment of a community to a cultural resource, and implicate the audience in political processes without creating a hand-wringing helplessness.

The RSA has developed the following commissioned works:

- Gulbenkian Foundation & RSA: Grace Ndiritu, Ivan and Heather Morison and a writer to develop work in and from the context of media & environment agencies, over three years.
- Wetlands & Wildfowl Trust, the Greater London Authority & RSA: Initiated by artist Jeremy Deller. Competition for architects, designers, children, to design a home for bats at the London Wetlands Centre, London, to be followed by a publication and possible exhibition. Exploring biodiversity, sustainability in architecture and other concerns – but obliquely.
- In July 2005, a research visit to Ghana with Elsie Owusu OBE, architect; Jude Kelly OBE, Artistic Director, South Bank Centre, and BBC World Service presenter & journalist, Linda Duffin took place. In November 2005, RSA was involved with the Second International Conference on environmental issues in Sub-Saharan Africa with Mark Nash, Katie Holten, and Tue Greenfort & Dillon Cohen. Further possible initiatives are currently in development.
- Education Pilots take teams of artists, philosophers, environmentalists, and dialogue experts to facilitate communication around artworks. This has involved commissioning Imi Maufe and Sidney Sharma to work on educational pilots in primary schools within the Bristol area. Peter Rogers, artist; Heather Goodman, philosopher; Ed Gillespie (co-director of Futerra) and a dialogue expert work with three teachers and children in London schools.
- Information & Discourse projects include a December, 2006 publication, *Land, Arts: a cultural ecology handbook*, edited by Max Andrews; www.artsandecology.org, providing information about the RSA Arts & Ecology program, and the development of a more ambitious website with Dartington School of Art. News Bulletins compliment the website and highlight key initiatives outside the program. A graduate program in art and ecology is in development with Dartington. Consultations and involvement are on-going with a number of artists and organizations including the Natural History Museum, Cape Farewell, Helix, Platform, Oxford University, Defra, ACE Green Parks, Nesta, Chartered Institute of Water & Environmental Management, RSPB and Greenpeace.

- In May 2006, LSE, ACE & the RSA collaborate in a 5-day workshop to take place in Guangdong Province focusing on environmental, social & economic issues, leading towards building a presence in China.

Discussion followed the presentation. In posing questions to Ms. Crimmin, the participants raised a number of issues, including:

- the difficulty of sustaining the interest of the science community in artistic projects;
- the ethical issues within some scientific research and the unresolved dilemmas faced by artists working with them;
- the challenge to engage both the general public and art audiences;
- political dimensions that come into play in some international initiatives;
- the protection of artistic autonomy within educational and other partnerships.

Some artistic strategies disregarding 'green' practices would meet with resistance from environmental activists, and the relationship of culture to nature, a long-standing theme within art, remains anthropocentric.

Open Discussion

NB: Participants were asked to comment on the following questions that were outlined in the invitation document preceding the Think Tank:

If we are to ask about the place of Art in Ecology (Ecology in the sense of the relations of living organisms to their surroundings; whereas Human Ecology refers to the relationship between human communities and their environments), we must question what are the best forms of collaboration between artists and others working on and in the human environment. We must ask what ways can be developed to make the collaboration always - or nearly always - positive and creative as well as humanly and environmentally fulfilling.

1. *When and in what ways have Art and Ecology collaborations worked best?*
2. *How can our collective understanding of this collaborative process be expanded?*
3. *To what extent is there a requirement/need and interest in developing this area of practice further?*
4. *How can we ensure best possible arts practice while at the same time encouraging ecologists and environmentalists to express their perspectives and messages through the arts? How do we draw in artists who have yet to be engaged in addressing environmental issues and ecologists/sustainability advocates who have yet to engage the arts to communicate?*

5. *How can we encourage artists to think freely and openly and also have an expectation of the arts as an instrument of change?*
6. *How can we encourage sustainability advocates to explore new means to value the natural environment and bring about reflections on the social and cultural impacts of environmental problems? What contribution can the arts make to this process?*
7. *Who should locate the focus? Where should artists place their attention? For example at the crisis end of environmental issues (including pollution and potential energy and water shortages), or more generally on sustainability and conservation – or leave the determining of focus to artists?*
8. *What relations do arts organizations and funders have to arts and sustainability activities?*
9. *How can we develop existing and new areas of knowledge and activity that would benefit from these collaborations?*

Comments and points of view expressed in the open discussion have been summarized, and grouped in a series of six themes.

1. Collaboration

In seeking to uncover the potential and understand the barriers to Art and Ecology collaborations, the participants observed a number of characteristics of the collaborative process that need to be taken into account. Successful collaboration between artists and scientists recognizes that they share many points of understanding in their approaches. Generally speaking, artists explore, learn, and experiment through the media they use, and some scientists have come to acknowledge the subjective aspects of the practice of science. Specialists sometimes focus too much on the inside of their own discipline and their own practices, and collaboration requires the effort of understanding the different points of view of both the artistic and scientific communities. Researchers and environmentalists, whether coming from the traditions of stewardship, land use planning, conservation, education or activism, value the skills and techniques of performance and music, visual art, story telling and written language, in communicating knowledge. It is understood that information alone is not sufficient to develop meaningful awareness, and that a deep awareness is crucial to change behaviors. Engaging people with nature and with one another allows them to envision different ways of being.

Many participants felt there may be more potential in non-profit, informal and creative working environments in which long-term, sustainable programs may engage audiences, involve educators, and document the results. In commenting upon the current political context, where there have been cuts to science programs on global warming, for instance, it was seen to be important to activate the public and for the public to take action. A sense of urgency was expressed regarding the need for awareness about environmental and development issues

to keep pace with the accelerated rate of environmental threats. A shared appreciation of the environment, on a human level, was seen as the common ground on which shared objectives with business people are possible. Collaboration was described as an appropriate process to discover places of overlap. Recent approaches to conflict resolution recognize that collaboration has an important and distinctive characteristic. In collaborating, one must ask 'why' - in asking 'why', one redefines the entire objective of the exercise.

Opinions diverged regarding the process of collaboration and the product of such work. The dialogue that comes out of collaboration was seen as too limited by some, and that tangible and specific outcomes are necessary. As an example, if a workshop focusing on agriculture and diversity were to involve science researchers and students, visual artists, dancers, spoken word artists, farmers and biotech executives, with the objective to create works of art within a given time frame, there would be an opportunity to learn from each other, and to value each other's point of view. Contrary experiences about collaboration were shared: it can be fractious and demoralizing. For example, bringing together forestry CEOs, scientists, long house speakers, and residents to have a conversation regarding the land is a difficult process. It requires responding to the unexpected outcomes of collaboration and being able to improvise, sometimes stepping back and apologizing, and learning ways to behave in different contexts without giving offense. That being said, no one will care sufficiently about wilderness areas unless they have a personal experience in them. Introducing ceremony, with an artist as animator, was cited as a possible model, while acknowledging concerns about limiting art practice to its communicative function.

A frustration was expressed regarding the requirement of proven results when working in certain contexts. While refusing to take part in establishing the results of the work is not realistic, art projects are often evaluated with more demanding criteria than the institutions of the status quo. For instance, it was expressed that in an equal model, the penal system should have to provide statistical outcomes on the funds they spend, to in comparison with the money that funds work with at-risk youth. The fear on the part of artists that they will be lost in the process of collaborating with other fields was seen as well founded, because more social value is placed on science. The authority of art stems from the validation of cultural institutions that are rarely involved in such collaborations.

2. Nature, the symbolic and representation

The participants explored the relationship of artistic and ecological practice to concepts of nature, and the role of culture in defining what is understood to be nature. The need to reframe of how society understands our relationship to nature was described as the core of this art practice. The public domain was seen as the obvious context for thinking this through. Non-didactic work and

inventive collaborations were cited as providing more complex situations for thinking.

Expanding on the dangers of confusing the difference between representation and experience, cautions were expressed about relying too heavily on interpretations that represent nature as a theme park, that over-interpret and over-signify it. Undifferentiated experience was seen as being in short supply, and perhaps a better role for the artist is that of an agent, encouraging a community to interact directly with natural systems.

This led to the observation that our society lacks cultural sensibilities around sustainability and continuity, and that stewardship trust models do not escape ideas of ownership, responsibility and control – which were seen as unconvincing concepts. Because knowledge is incomplete and that the precautionary principle should be promoted, it was suggested that space for the unknown, perhaps in the form of parks, should be created. Perhaps the way to overcome the tendency to see unused land as waste is to enshrine it, to associate it with spirituality, and First Nations tradition is an important connection. The designation of space in perpetuity, space without a purpose, will need a cultural practice to sustain it. First nation's representation was found to be lacking at this discussion, and a need to move beyond the neo colonial portrayal of first nation's culture was identified.

In returning to the limits of our understanding of natural systems, it was noted that scientists, scholars, painters, musicians have a talent for recognizing pattern and structure, and increasingly institutions such as MIT now require art classes for its students in order to develop this ability to see structure and pattern. Good art was described as not in need of a declared meaning or message, but rather as carrying the artist's vision within in its structure and pattern. A critique of dominant western mythologies, like those expressed within television, was expanded upon. First nation's cultures were seen as developing mythologies that openly share the structure and pattern of the natural world, whereas western mythologies render the ecosystem invisible. Marshall McLuhan was quoted as saying, "We don't know who discovered water, but we are pretty sure it wasn't a fish."

3. Ethics

In discussing the limits and potential of collaboration, the conversation returned often to questions of ethics and values, both within a given field and between different ones. It was noted that each ideology has its own paradoxes, and hence the importance for collaborative processes to come to terms with the assumptions within each discipline. The choices made in artistic or scientific research have repercussions, and it is difficult to determine how to make ethical choices when earlier decisions within a field of research impact one's own involvement. It was observed that change happens in different ways and by

different means, but we need to be careful about how we go about finding knowledge, and how we construct knowledge about 'outcomes'. Methods that value the 'measurable' and 'reproducible' are historically tied to discourses that divorced themselves from ethics and subjectivity.

Some participants highlighted that the term "collaboration" has not always had such warm and hopeful associations. Not long ago, environmental activism in British Columbia meant blockades, arrests, non-violent protest. Many artists took part in documenting this movement, books were published, and media interest was high. The cultural work produced was seen as innovative. Collaboration with corporations, and the resulting dialogue, was described as useless in addressing the looting of the forests and the destruction of safety codes and practices. The recent issue of *Vanity Fair*, the 'green issue' (April 2006), was cited as an example of the difficulty in reconciling different values and ethics in collaborating with corporations. It was noted that there is no consensus on 'green' ethics, even amongst environmental groups, and trying to reach one can lead to an ethical quagmire. The need for artists and environmentalists to enter into such a conversation was judged as highly necessary. Some projects will make ethical choices that will lead to criticism, but the ability to make mistakes needs to be retained. This is a fascinating and dangerous terrain that needs to be explored.

The importance of looking at things holistically was argued, along with the need to include the dimension of sustainability within art practices. It is hard to live by one's values, yet there exists a need to consider what technologies and power sources, what materials and processes are used in the making of artwork. Are they sustainable? Are there ways of making them sustainable? Artists' attitudes to animals needs to be called in to question – some use animals within their work in very questionable ways. An example was raised regarding ethics and cultural specificity. Following the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, in the subsequent rush of Vancouver real estate speculation, immigrants often preferred to cut down neighborhood trees. Human values often clash: less talked about is the fact that the values and interests of different species are often in conflict. Ethics cannot be removed from the conversation about values, and not everything is fair game. Cultural diversity, like biodiversity, goes beyond questions of immigration. Intercultural collaboration must consider the cultures of specific areas of influence, such as corporate culture, non-profit culture, and so on. Partnership possibilities with the private sector were discussed, such as the UNESCO-L'Oreal scholarships, where two very different organizations have joined efforts towards a common objective: promoting women in science.

It was suggested that any collaboration has to begin with establishing the values and ethics of the collaborators, although it is difficult for all participants to share all the same values, and if that is a requirement for action then none will occur. It also suggested that it is important to be conscious of the impact of collaboration on one's values.

Collaboration was characterized as able to accommodate a certain amount of differences in the mandates of collaborating organizations. For instance, in political activism, coalitions are formed to act on specific issues with the understanding that some members of the coalition have conflicting interests that they set aside in pursuing shared objectives. Differing terminology however, especially between the various disciplines, was identified as a boundary often difficult to overcome.

4. Youth

Throughout the afternoon discussion, the relationship of Art and Ecology work to youth and young people was seen as critical to sustainability and social change. It was noted that environmental groups, and recently educators, are observing that existing education models do not necessarily lead to changed behavior and that far more emphasis must be placed on the development of critical thinking. Studies were cited, reporting that young people have a harder time imagining changing the world, than imagining the end of the world. A need was identified: to develop a set of questions that engage young people where they live, in order to influence their orientation to the future. This set of questions, while creating optimism and hope, can crystallize into priorities for action.

Community interpretation projects were described as going beyond putting up signage or conducting tours. They engage people in profound ways by appealing to their senses and allowing them to listen, to taste and to see in a new way. Educating children about the natural world was seen as an urgent priority, because kids think that there will be no natural world when they grow up, and this is leading to apathy and a pessimistic world-view. The group was urged to investigate the potential for youth to regain the sense of the sacred and the natural world by balancing the activism with a sense of celebration and optimism, honoring what is going right and joining different cultures in celebrating the natural world – a combination of beauty and shame. It was observed that youth are most empowered when they themselves determine the parameters and run the project. This develops a sense of endless possibilities and builds the continuity into the project.

5. The local, the global, and the network

While it was acknowledged that Canadians need to know more about the world and to connect with work that is happening around the world, Canadian experience of the land is seen as distinct and its cultural production unique. We have a different history, and we are for instance particularly affected by global warming; we need to include the specifics of Canadian culture in on-going discussions. Certain lessons from the natural world were cited, such as cross border water issues, as evidence that we cannot look at things in isolation, either as a country or a sector. Nationalism was described as the self-respect of communities, and the group was called upon to remember our very recent

colonial history and the effects of colonial-mindedness on our culture. Fraternal relations that respect differences and uniqueness are different from the smokescreen globalism of capital, which undermines the consciousness of our own legitimacy as a culture. Cultural activity was described as needing room to breathe and develop its autonomy. Concerns were raised that post-nationalist rhetoric confuses influence and domination.

It was suggested that 'global collaboration' tends to mean working with partners that are well-known and relatively similar, such as the UK. Ways are needed to move against the grain of political conflict through international connections that are based on our shared need for solutions to environmental problems. Cultural funding was developed in order to build a form of nationalism for Canada. Funding should now move to global models. It was suggested that initiatives that are place-based, but not necessarily local, can develop techniques for collaborative networks – and the collaborative relationship was seen as transformative in itself.

Models for sustainability were characterized as addressing four dimensions: cultural, economic, environmental and social. Collaboration is not predictable and the collaborators must have their incentive to participate taken into account. It is critical to create a space for collaboration to take place, one that provides the path for researchers, artists, practitioners and community members to connect with one another. The route from sharing information to taking action is not a smooth process, and the link from awareness and actual change is complex. A simple list serve is seen as a safe environment for getting to know what others are doing. Simply knowing what else is going on can influence and even change one's own practice.

Concerns were raised about the demands of creating a network and that 'networks of networks' can become bureaucratic, onerous, confusing and difficult to navigate. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs provides a model for international conversation that takes on global issues from outside the perceived centers of power. It is a cooperative model of international collaboration between scholars that has had a lot of impact. It brings together top scientists as individuals rather than as representatives of government.

6. Funding: questions, suggestions and new models

The participants engaged in an extended discussion of the funding issues and challenges particular to eco-art practices.

In regard to public funding opportunities, there were concerns about a perceived lack of legitimation for this kind of work within the gallery system and therefore within peer-assessed arts grant competitions. Many community-based artists, having been consistently refused art grants, no longer apply. This lower status was seen as part of an historical cycle, since some ephemeral practices enjoyed

a high regard within the international art community in the 1960's and '70's, whereas today's art world was described as more focused on object-based practices. A desire for galleries to become involved and support community-based, socially-engaged practice was stated, as a means for this art practice to gain value and legitimation. It was suggested that efforts to develop a theory base for this practice would build a historical legitimacy and encourage more serious attention from the art community.

It was suggested that eco-art practice represents a paradigmatic shift in how art is defined, requiring a critical dialogue around how to fund it, and how to measure its effects. It is dynamic, hard to quantify and, very often, projects take a long time in development before the funding proposal phase. Participants expressed the need for new programs that are long term, flexible, and sustained, to be juried by people with expertise in these art practices. Alternately, funding bodies could add more eco-artists to granting juries without changing the programs. Additional money would need to be added to the existing programs, however, to accommodate an expanded mandate. With the strong focus on youth in the day's proceedings, it was suggested that the inclusion of emerging artists on juries would allow them to gain perspective and develop skills.

The discussion focused on ways to develop partnerships between arts funders and those from other disciplines and areas of interest. It was observed that while significant increases in traditional arts programs are unlikely, opportunities for new money from the environmental benefactors and business supporters are possible if partnerships can be developed. It was noted that businesses find it increasingly important to be linked with ecological interests and programs. Large research projects in science are required to set aside a percentage of their significant resources for communication – designed to 'connect the public to science'. Within private foundations, attempts have been made to fund projects with both artistic and environmental areas of interest, with mixed results. The greatest potential in this context lies with individual donors that are open to both. While there is a great deal of popular support for both arts and environmental work, as demonstrated in polling results, approximately 90% of donations go to other causes such as health research or services, or religious organizations. This is documented in both the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and on the Canadian Environmental Grant makers Network website.

Professional artists, arts organizations and arts funders are increasingly interested in partnering with individuals and organizations from other sectors of society. The current environment has seen those in the arts collaborating on initiatives with their counterparts in science, the justice system, health care, and business, among other sectors. Funding bodies, including the Canada Council for the Arts, recognize the potential value of these partnerships in areas such as health and creative communities as part of the expanding boundaries of artistic practice and also as a means of enhancing public engagement with the arts.

They allow the arts to reach a wider public by better integrating them into everyday life.

The need for caution when developing partnerships was stated. Artists interested in the social and political aspects of new technologies have reported that they were not always happy with the outcomes of art/science collaborations. They have voiced concerns about their contributions being trivialized, and that the financial benefits were meager. Their ability to critique the direction of a given research project is seen as important to their artistic autonomy, and they resist the possibility that their work will be used to ameliorate negative aspects of technological developments. A distinction was made between acceptable and unacceptable levels of compromise when collaborating with corporations and other organizations. Elevated Wetlands, a model project, was completely funded by the plastics industry toward the development of plastic recycling technology, and several science-based foundations and non-profits indeed share similar values of intellectual freedom.

A different manner of concern was expressed about long-term affiliation with environmental non-profit organizations that face similar funding challenges as art organizations. Staff changes, changes to the interpretation of their mandates or to the makeup of stewardship teams create an on-going lack of sufficient capital and human resources.

The discussion turned to potential models of sustained commitment, such as an institution to support eco-art. Other art forms have galleries and theatres to support and lobby for the work of artists. At a point in their lives, artists are interested in a more stable base and more predictable resources in order to develop their work. Most organizations working on eco-art projects are not national in scope and are relatively small, usually working to connect individuals since it is they, and not organizations, who have relationships. On the other hand, institutions are seen as mutable, and there are many examples where artists came together to demand better representation within existing institutions, such as the call for regional theatres to produce more works by Canadian playwrights. The pressure from artists, in this case, was seen to result in the suggestion from funders to institutions that they include Canadian work, while avoiding the imposition of specific criteria to the programming autonomy of the institution.

It was observed that, given the earlier discussion on maintaining both the importance of the local and immediate, as well as the international and networked constituency, conversations must happen at all levels of power and across the silos within bureaucracies, across ministries, and across sectors. While there are few mechanisms currently in place that can make that happen, foundations are well placed to initiate a new way of doing things. Can funding agencies develop a collaborative model and stake their support for initiatives in a sustained way?

A series of questions were posed regarding models of support that take into account the concerns around collaboration, the representation of nature, national and international networks, youth and ethics that were expressed in the day of discussion:

- What would a globally integrated funding model look like?
- Is it youth engaged, networked, and collaborative?
- Does it embrace new standards of excellence?
- How would it address questions of ownership, how would it grapple with the needs of established and emerging artists?
- Since we are not seeing massive increases in arts funding at the government level, how do we make it happen?
- Are there areas outside of programs, beyond individual projects, that funders can develop?

Suggestions for consideration included:

- An international initiative could focus around the Olympic cities – Beijing, Vancouver, and then London. A global coalition of funders could host a competitive program of truly interdisciplinary projects that could become an annual program, based on an exploration of art, ecology and communication.
- Include community-based and eco-arts practices in arts awards that are currently sponsored by arts councils and foundations. This might be an opportunity for a partnership with environmental organizations and businesses.
- Include industries and businesses that have an affinity to both the arts and the environment, such as home-based gardening in the city and eco-tourism.
- The existing granting model is designed around the idea of artists as independent producers. They obtain funds by pitching a project to produce an object or event, fulfill the terms of the grant and so forth. Another model could be developed – artists as designers, paid to work on design teams that address specific problems. Our skills in problem solving would be supported to take on issues in housing and homelessness, or transportation, for instance. Perhaps private and municipal governments could collaborate on funding artists to solve problems of social importance.
- Devise a way to get the most diverse group of people together. Science is more than new media – what about oncologists and artists working together? It was suggested that the Canada Council consider resuming

the program of artists and scientists working together, with an expanded mandate. What about a program that funds a scientist to work as an artist for a year? Or a week-long workshop of artists and scientists with a specific outcome, to produce an artwork in that time? Can this program be developed to become global in focus, with international people around the table?

- We should give the same kinds of opportunities to younger people that we ourselves have had? Open, interdisciplinary environments that create confident individuals would give the younger generation the opportunity to define the next stages of cultural practices and support them in their own country. Intergenerational work is key to sustainability.
- Existing programs, such as the 1% for public art program, might adopt a different model by building a trust with the funds to support larger projects in the future, such as commissioning an artist to design a recycling facility. It would allow for non-human others to be considered in the planning process and could change the way we think about public art.
- A new model could fund 'brokers' who build the relationships for art and environmental collaborations. These individuals would not have an artistic role, but rather are the bridgemakers or dealmakers that seek out partners and work out the terms of collaborative projects.

Eco-art is connected to activism in the sense that it is immediate, both local and global, and has focused effects. A high engagement grant-making model could be designed, in which one window allows clients to access the support of different partners, not just for money but also for technical assistance. This model would recognize project brokers as professionals, and would use reporting systems that make sense to clients.

Next Steps

- The Inter-Arts Office of the Canada Council will look at the viability of mapping thematic trends in the projects that they fund by devising a way to monitor areas of interest among applicants.
- The Canadian Commission for UNESCO will partner with the Living by Water Project to include two workshops on arts and ecology at two key environmental conferences taking place in summer 2006: Stewardship Canada (Newfoundland, July 2006) and the annual conference of the Canadian Network for Environmental and Educational Communication (EECOM), entitled "Salt of the Earth: Creating a Culture of Environmental Respect and Sustainability" (Nova Scotia, October 2006).

- Clive Callaway has begun a briefing paper from the environmental community regarding arts and the environment. This document will be shared with participants.
- A web forum will be considered
- An international conference and art and ecology was suggested. If it takes place, it should consider:
 - Providing more opportunities to talk about the work
 - Including time to socialize
 - Making the circle bigger to include first nations and more environmental representation
 - Focusing less on funding and more on ideas
 - Including other art disciplines such as writing in a range of genres
 - Involving presentations of eco art in a festival format including visual art, theatre and performance
 - Using a weekend format

Resources cited during discussion:

greenmuseum.org

A nonprofit, online museum of environmental art, advances creative efforts to improve our relationship with the natural world.

<http://greenmuseum.org/>

The Columbia Basin – A Cultural Environment, an Environmental Culture

The 2006 Basin Cultural Conference will be held in Castlegar, October 19-22, 2006. The Castlegar and District Arts Council will host this year's conference to involve participants basin-wide to expand public awareness and to build stronger partnerships among artists, art, cultural, heritage and environmental organizations. This conference includes linkages between culture, art and the Columbia River basin environment.

www.basinculture.com

Environment Canada: water, art and culture

http://www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/culture/e_cultur.htm

Pugwash

<http://www.pugwash.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pugwash_Conferences_on_Science_and_World_Affairs

Entertaining Science

<http://www.corneliastreetcafe.com/down.htm>

World Urban Forum III

<http://www.unhabitat.org/wuf/2006/>

Genetic Technologies and Animals

Published this January 2006 as a special issue of the Springer_Verlag journal *AI and Society*

<http://www.eciad.ca/~gigliott/CGnet/index.html>

Elevated Wetlands

<http://www.elevatedwetlands.com/>

Culture and sustainability: The importance of celebration and community ritual, May 26, 2006 - 2:00-4:30 pm.

Cultural Research Salon - Simon Fraser University–Harbour Centre, Vancouver. Presented by the Creative City Network of Canada's Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities.

<http://www.creativecity.ca/cecc/activities.html>

CinéUrbana @ World Urban Forum 3

June 19-23, 2006, Vancouver

An on-site video theatre at WUF3 screening films from around the world on urban sustainability issues.

English: <http://www.creativecity.ca/cineurbana/index.html>

French: <http://www.creativecity.ca/cineurbana/index-f.html>

National Survey of Giving and Volunteering

www.nsgvp.org/

Canadian Environmental Grant makers Network

www.cegn.org

Participants (in alphabetical order)

NB: Other interested individuals from a wide range of backgrounds were invited and were not able to attend this session.

Amir Ali Alibhai, Interdisciplinary Artist; Arts Programmer, Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre; Board Member, the Canada Council for the Arts

Nancy Bleck, Artist/Photographer, Co-Founder, Utsam Witness Project; Instructor, ECIAD

Clive Callaway, Co-Founder, The Living by Water Project

Beth Carruthers, Artist

Daniel Conrad, Filmmaker, Producer, Rhokopsin Productions (films on art and science)

Michaela Crimmin, Arts Producer & Head of Arts, Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce, UK

Nancy Duxbury, Researcher & Writer; Director of Research, Creative City Network of Canada; Director, Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities (CCN/SFU)

Anne Focke, Executive Director, Grantmakers in the Arts

Carol Gigliotti, Associate Professor, Interactive Media & Environmental Ethics, ECIAD; writer, philosopher and environmental and animal rights activist

Eileen Gillette, Assistant Researcher, Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities (CCN/SFU)

Nelson Gray, Writer & Director with a focus on interdisciplinary and ecological performance

Alistair Haseline, Multimedia Sculptor, Willow Specialist & Weaver

Jeremy Long, Associate Director, BC Arts Council

Wei His Hu, Musician & Conductor, Environmental Youth Alliance

Oliver Kellhammer, Urban Restoration Artist, Writer & Teacher

Judith Marcuse, Artist, Producer and Teacher

Robin Mathews, Writer

Dominique Potvin, Programme Officer, Natural Sciences, Canadian Commission for UNESCO

Stuart Poyntz, PHD Candidate & Youth Media Producer, Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness (UBC)

Sadira Rodriguez, Program Manager, Arts Now, 2010 Legacies Now

Carmen Rosen, Artist, Artistic Director of Still Moon Arts Society; Founder, Renfrew Ravine Moon Festival, East Vancouver

Sara Ross (aka RedSara), Artist & Co-Director, Pedal Play

Claude Schryer, Inter-Arts Office Coordinator, the Canada Council for the Arts

Naomi Singer, Artist & Artistic Director, Secret Lantern Society, the annual Winter Solstice Lantern Festival

Diana Lynn Thompson, Artist working with community and participatory art; environmental, performance and celebratory arts.

Mauro Vescera, Program Director, Culture, the Vancouver Foundation
Kelly Wilhelm, Partnership and Networks Coordinator, Canada Council for the Arts
Mark Winston, Entomologist & Writer, SFU Simon Fraser University Centre for Dialogue
jil p. weaving, Artist & Arts Programmer, Vancouver Board of Parks