

Art-Making in the Anthropocene

A series of Royal Society of Edinburgh-funded Research Workshops organized by Emily Doolittle, Sarah Hopfinger, and Stuart MacRae, and a concert of new Scottish and international music about the Anthropocene performed by Katherine Wren and Nordic viola.

Tuesdays from 17:00-18:30 UTC
February 16 through April 6



Image: For Berta (They Fear Us Because We Are Fearless) by Julie Sperling



BSL Interpretation: Yvonne Strain, Tracey Tyer, Anna Kitson, and Katie Fenwick
Technical Support: Joe Jones

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Katherine Wren and Nordic Viola
All of the wonderful speakers

For more information, or to access the talks after they have taken place, please contact
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I. What is Art-Making in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 16 February 2021, 17:00-18:30 UTC (GMT)

Deborah Dixon (geographer)



Gabriela Lena Frank (composer)



Welcome to the Anthropocene (Deborah Dixon)

While the debate on whether or not the Anthropocene constitutes a new Geological epoch is ongoing, in practical planning terms mitigation, adaptation and resilience have all been offered as key to how we live with the Anthropocene, a planet-wide condition wherein carbon capitalism has reshaped the ‘building blocks’ of Nature, from mined geologic strata to warming skies and acidified oceans; where the finitude of resources and species, including humanity itself, looms large; where planning the future has become a matter of anticipating crisis after crisis; and where new futures built around care and responsibility are imagined. The Anthropocene is a vast reconfiguration not only of the climate, oceans and strata of the Earth, but of bodies, genomes and human ways of living also. What are our Anthropocene lives?

Deborah Dixon is Professor of Geography at the University of Glasgow, the co-Editor of the interdisciplinary journal *GeoHumanities*, and the co-Convener of the MSc Earth Futures. Her research addresses feminist geopolitics, art/science collaborations, and monstrous geographies.

Composing in the Californian Anthropocene (Gabriela Lena Frank)

Gabriela prioritizes arts citizenship as central in the life of an artist. She is a climate activist, co-authoring a regular column on climate action within the music industry for *Chamber Music America Magazine* and creating a Climate Initiative for the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative

Academy of Music. In this talk, Gabriela will delve into exploring what the role of the artist can look like during these times.

Currently serving as Composer-in-Residence with the storied Philadelphia Orchestra and included in the Washington Post's list of the 35 most significant women composers in history, identity has always been at the center of composer/pianist **Gabriela Lena Frank's** music. Born in Berkeley, California (September, 1972), to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Gabriela explores her multicultural American heritage through her compositions. In 2017, Gabriela founded the award-winning Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music, a non-profit training institution held on her two rural properties in Boonville, CA for emerging composers from a vast array of demographics and aesthetics.

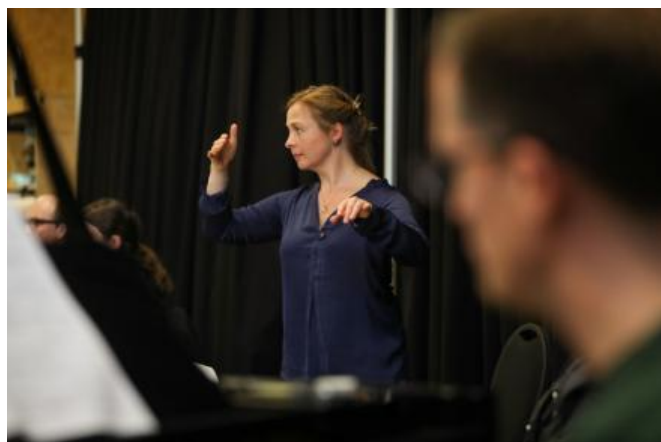
2. Creating Inclusive Arts Practices in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 23 February 2021, 17:00-18:30 UTC (GMT)

Raeesa Lalani (artistic director)



Holly Mathieson (conductor)



Uchenna Ngwe (oboist, researcher)



photo credit: Richard Duebel

Prismatic Arts (Raeesa Lalani)

Raeesa will share story of the Prismatic Arts Festival to give the viewpoint of the presenter and expand on the role of being a change maker and providing opportunities. Art is used as a source of healing and a tool that builds communities, and is a creative outlet for one to share their identity, culture and stories.

Raeesa Lalani is a young arts professional flourishing as the new Artistic Director of the Prismatic Arts Festival. With a B.A. in English and a Masters in Journalism, the arts industry called her back as a professional, as Raeesa has long been active as an actress, singer and has been known to tickle the ivories too. Raeesa feels immensely fulfilled being part of an organization that has enabled her to grow personally in the arts but also be a part of a greater cause that continually strives to help the growth of Indigenous and culturally diverse artists.

Musical diversity (Holly Mathieson)

The existing financial and organisational models in the arts world can help or hinder efforts to make the arts more inclusive and open. Good intent, no matter how earnest it is, will not be enough, as movements towards greater diversity in the past have shown. I'll talk a little about the role of the programmer - either as conductor/performer or administrator - in enacting and facilitating an expansion of musical voices, how we can sell that vision to those in our organisations or audiences who are sceptical or concerned with budget constraints, and how we can keep a healthily critical view of our own motivations and choices.

Holly Mathieson is Music Director of Symphony Nova Scotia and Co-Artistic Director of Nevis Ensemble. She has recorded for BBC Radio 3, Decca and Delphian, and is a frequent panelist for industry discussions and strategy sessions.

Black Classical Musicians in Britain (Uchenna Ngwe)

Uchenna Ngwe will be discussing her research into the history of Black classical musicians in Britain. She'll also explore the topic's relevance to the numerous 'diversity and inclusion' conversations that are currently taking place in classical music organisations and identify how active classical music curation can be central to this.

Uchenna Ngwe is an oboist and PhD researcher. Her research focuses on the historical presence of people of African descent in British classical music and how curatorial-activism can broaden perceptions within the genre.

3. Somatic Art-Making Practices in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 2 March 2021, 17:00-18:30 UTC (GMT)

Petra Kupperts (performance artist, disability culture activist)



Robbie Synge (choreographer, performer)

Julie Cleves (performer, dancer, visual artist)



Eco Soma: Pain/Touch (Petra Kupperts)

In this talk, Petra Kupperts will share two moments from her community performance practice: touching through, touching with, in respect, with a pause for pain practices. One of these moments happens at an archeology museum in Canada, working with an international group who wish to think through disability in intersectional ways, and one moment takes place in Turtle Disco, a disability culture somatic writing/movement studio. In both moments, pain and touch transform into artful attention to material and history, to environment and being.

Petra Kupperts is an internationally active disability culture activist, and a community performance artist. She creates participatory community performance environments that think/feel into public space, tenderness, site-specific art, access and experimentation. Petra grounds herself in disability culture methods, and uses ecosomatics, performance, and speculative writing to engage audiences toward more socially just and enjoyable futures. <https://petrakuppertsfiction.wordpress.com/>

Co-navigation on Earth (Julie Cleves and Robbie Synge)

Julie Cleves and Robbie Synge present the shape and evolution of their collaborative practice spanning over ten years. Initially studio-based, their work investigated physical possibilities in contact together on the floor. They now investigate physical access of different outdoor spaces together, involving simple objects they incorporate in cooperative physical actions.

Julie Cleves is a London-based performance and dance artist. Julie initially studied BA (Hons) Fine Art and MA Art and Design in Leeds before working with a number of dance and theatre companies nationally and internationally.

Robbie Synge is based rurally in Nethy Bridge in the Highlands, and creates performance, film and objects rooted in choreographic thinking around the body and its meeting points and touch with people, objects and the natural and built environment.

4. Decolonizing Art-Making in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 9 March 2021, 17:00-18:30 UTC (GMT)

Shzr Ee Tan (ethnomusicologist)



Dinuk Wijeratne (conductor, composer, performer)



Megaphones Hiding in Trees (Shzr Ee Tan)

FOR THE hundreds of daily devotees and tourists making an autumn pilgrimage to the holy site of Hangzhou's 3rd-century Lingyin Temple the path to Buddhist contemplation is laden with moss-skimmed paths, pebbly streams, falling leaves, ancient Buddhas carved into walls – and ebullient birdsong. But all is not as it seems: as one moves in on closer approach to the temple itself, the 'birds' are revealed not to be perching on tree

branches or even sitting in gilded cages. Instead, they are the making of enterprising craftsmen-turned-touts. Guarding the main entrance to the temple, these men and women carry on their bodies small satchels containing souvenir bamboo whistles. These tiny instruments they actively and repeatedly toot – against each other and to incoming visitors – in simulation of the calls of hyperactive birds tweeting into the natural soundscapes of rustling forests and flowing water. It is all, surely, pastoral and idyllic – but also an attention-grabbing sales pitch.

Shzr Ee Tan is a Senior Lecturer and ethnomusicologist (with a specialism in Sinophone and Southeast Asian worlds) at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is interested in impact-based issues of music and decolonisation, aspirational cosmopolitanism, and race discourses in music scenes around the world (including HE), with a view towards understanding marginality through the lenses of intersectionality.

Reconciling Identities - 'East-West' Music-making (Dinuk Wijeratne)

Sri Lankan-born Canadian composer, pianist, and conductor Dinuk Wijeratne speaks about his East-West style of music making, and how he uses music to reconcile multiple identities. His 2011 *Tabla Concerto* has been described by Oscar-winning composer John Corigliano as 'fantastic, complex, and brilliant' and by the Grammy-winning tabla player Sandeep Das as 'simply the best Western Classical piece written for my instrument'.

Sri Lankan-born Canadian **Dinuk Wijeratne** is a JUNO and multi-award-winning composer, pianist, and conductor who has been described by the *New York Times* as 'exuberantly creative' and by the *Toronto Star* as 'an artist who reflects a positive vision of our cultural future'. His boundary-crossing work sees him equally at home in collaborations with symphony orchestras and string quartets, tabla players and DJs, and takes him to international venues as poles apart as the Berlin Philharmonie and the North Sea Jazz Festival. He was featured as a main character in 'What would Beethoven do?' - the documentary about innovation in Classical music featuring Eric Whitacre, Bobby McFerrin and Ben Zander. As a creativity consultant for classical musicians, he serves private clients as well as students of the Banff Centre and Toronto's Glenn Gould School. His music and collaborative work embrace the great diversity of his international background and influences.

5. Interdisciplinary Art-Making in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 16 March 2021, 17:00-18:30 UTC (GMT)

Lekelia Jenkins (marine sustainability scientist, science dance choreographer)



Lewis Hou (interdisciplinary education specialist, director of Science Ceilidh)



Sea Turtle Dance (Lekelia Jenkins)

In this presentation Lekelia will show video excerpts of an award-winning dance about sea turtle conservation and briefly summarize the science behind it. She will discuss the participatory methods used to create a science dance and the benefits the process has for participants.

Dr Lekelia “Kiki” Jenkins is a marine sustainability scientist and science dance choreographer. She practices and studies science dance as a means of science engagement and social change.

Valuing Creativity for Everyone (Lewis Hou)

How can we ensure everyone's creativity, curiosity and wellbeing are truly valued? Where can cultural practitioners be enablers or gate-keepers? And how can this interdisciplinary community-based approach and understanding support social justice? Lewis will share a few learnings and provocations based on his involvement in a five-year action research project on Cultural Democracy and work with Science Ceilidh.

Lewis Hou is passionate about bringing diverse ideas and people together to make boldly interdisciplinary, participatory and socially-just work. He is the director of Science Ceilidh, facilitates the Culture & Wellbeing Community Network Scotland and one of the UK Creative Community Fellows 2020.

6. Art-Making With and About the Anthropocene

Tuesday 23 March 2021, 17:00 – 18:30 UTC (GMT)

Sarah Nicolls (pianist)



Julie Sperling (mosaic artist)



Francis Wilson (artist)



Music of Climate Change (Sarah Nicolls)

Sarah will present her experiences of making and presenting a music and text piece about climate change and the ecological crisis. She worked with 10 top UK climate scientists and held post-show discussions with the audience, where much of the meaning of the piece was revealed.

Sarah Nicolls is a pioneering pianist, innovating the shape of the piano as well as how to perform it. She has been featured regularly on BBC Radio 3, has toured extensively in Europe and her '12 Years' piece about climate change was selected as a Guardian Autumn Arts Top Pick and featured on BBC 4 Front Row.

Making Mosaic in the Anthropocene (Julie Sperling)

Julie will speak about her approach to both her process and practice, and why she thinks mosaic is a particularly powerful medium for talking about big, complex issues like the Anthropocene.

Julie Sperling is a Canadian artist using the ancient language of mosaic to speak about contemporary environmental issues.

Bodies and Boundaries in Performing Taxidermy (Francis Wilson)

Francis will share on her current practice-research on 'Bodies and Boundaries in Performing Taxidermy.' Her work uses a material feminist framework alongside cultural and artistic theories on taxidermy to explore how taxidermy processes in a live art context creates moments of shared vulnerability between bodies under the pressures of the current geological era.

Francis Marion Moseley Wilson is an American artist-academic working at the intersection of taxidermy and live art. She learned taxidermy as a part-time apprentice at a local shop in rural Ohio while studying as an undergrad at Oberlin Conservatory, and continued to explore taxidermic practices in performance during her MA at Brunel University and into her practice-based PhD at the University of Glasgow.

7. Environment and Art-Making in the Anthropocene

Tuesday 30 March 2021, 17:00 – 18:30 UTC (GMT)

Rosemary Lee (choreographer
and performer)



Paul Michael Henry (performance
artist and dancer)



Passage for Par (Rosemary Lee)

Much of Rosemary's work takes place outdoors in the hope that it can enhance both the viewers' and the performers' sense of themselves as part of the natural world. Rosemary will discuss this hope, making reference to *Passage for Par* (2018), a dance performance involving 30 women, created for and presented on Par Beach, commissioned by CAST for the Groundwork programme.

Choreographer and filmmaker **Rosemary Lee** works in a variety of contexts and media, including large-scale site-specific works with cross-generational casts, and video installations. Her interest is in both portrait and landscape, and in our relationship with the environment, urban and rural. She is a Work Place Affiliate artist, Senior Research Fellow -C-DaRE, Coventry University.

***In not On, Am not With* (Paul Michael Henry)**

Michael's presentation focuses on making art as a part of the world. This means bringing landscape and environment in to the intimacy of our selves, and bringing ourselves out into the landscape. When no cut is made between me and not-me, everything becomes subject, and the self which has no other finds its voice.

Paul Michael Henry is a Scottish performance artist, dancer and musician, and is artistic director of UNFIX Festival (www.unfixfestival.com). His work is informed by Butoh dance, punk rock and ritual, and is performed all over the world. Michael is currently doing a practice-based PhD on the subject of 'Ecological Selfhood'. www.paulmichaelhenry.com

8. Past, Present and Future

Tuesday 6 April 2021, 17:00 – 18:30 UTC (GMT)

Margaret Bennett (folklorist and musician)



Mele Broomes (artist and director)



photo credit: Matthew Arthur Williams

Landscapes and Soundscapes of the Highlands (Margaret Bennett)

For countless centuries Gaelic song and poetry have depicted the landscape of the Highlands and Islands with flora and fauna named and described in detail and contextualized in the lives of those who lived there. Two world wars followed by the building of hydro-electric power stations in the 1950s and '60s. brought major changes in the way of life, accelerated in the 21st century by the advent of the internet. Nevertheless, most of the old songs have endured and new songs emerge with each generation, although the context of singing and music making has changed radically. This talk gives examples across the generations and reflects on the impact of these changes on traditional Gaelic culture.

Margaret Bennett is a folklorist, writer, singer and broadcaster. She was brought up in a family of tradition bearers, Gaelic on her mother's side (from Skye) and Lowland Scots on her father's. A prize-winning author, she has written ten books, contributed to over 40 others, featured on media productions and several musical collaborations with her son, Martyn Bennett (1971–2005). Recipient of previous

awards for contributions to literature, folklore and culture, she recently received an Honorary Doctorate of Music (Glasgow, 2010), 'Le Prix du Québec' (for contributions to Quebec cultural studies, 2011) and was made an Honorary Professor of the Royal Scottish Academy in 2012, she is widely regarded as 'Scotland's foremost folklorist'.

Coinciding Ownership (Mele Broomes)

Reflecting on my interchangeable creative processes, I ask myself: how does care coincide with ownership? By structuring work in order to make purposeful space to listen. I gain a deeper understanding of the importance of not talking. Hearing evokes the gift of listening which evokes the gift of learning which evokes some truths.

And it's that bit that brings me back to ownership. As I continue to navigate concepts around my identity as a Black artist, thinking about the diversity in learning, perception and interpretation, I question myself, my worth. I see future visions, the elements, the paths and directions. I work at listening to my body and voice as they hold many memories, thoughts and provocations.

It's exciting to imaginatively breath up ideas and ways of connecting and learning, though often I don't understand nor can I find that amount of time to understand and reference the varying manifestations of words. So, I am still researching: do I qualify? What is the future of qualification?

Mele Broomes is a self-led director, artist and an award-winning choreographer and performer. Her work embodies stories from the collective voice, creating visceral and sensory collaborations through her ancestral heritage. Activating social questions, remembering and celebrating. Mele has worked on a variety of projects, including delivering workshops, mentorship, guest lecturing and tutorials with CCA, University of Dance and Circus (DOCH), Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, SSW, Scottish Contemporary Art Network, V&A Dundee, Vogue Scotland and more. Her work has been associated with organisations such as Tramway, Take Me Somewhere, The Work Room, Dance Base, SPLAYED Festival, CONTACT Manchester, Black Gold Art, Once Dance UK and Dance International Glasgow. Mele is known for being an idea initiator and project starter. She is founder and director of Body Remedy and co-founder of Project X.

Art-Making in the Anthropocene Concert (date TBA)
Performed by Katherine Wren and Nordic Viola

Ailie Robertson
Aileen Sweeney
Antonia Kattou
Martin Suckling
Emily Doolittle
Lisa Robertson
Anna Appleby

**sky dance*
**siku*
**it's a sad child that destroys its own weather*
**Her lullaby*
Gardenscape
Machair
Hrakningar

* pieces selected from a Scotland-wide call for scores