

Introduction

As a member of Shared Campus, Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), mainly its International Master Program in Cultural and Creative Industries (IMCCI) hosted its first Critical Ecologies symposium – bringing together various academics, artists, and students interested in the agenda. This symposium was sponsored by the University Social Responsibility, and High Education Sprout Project under Taiwan’s Ministry of Education. The Embodying Local Knowledges Symposium started off with a performance by Kuo-Hsin Chuang Pangcah Dance Theatre. Through its artistic vision and inquisitiveness, Chuang Kuo-Hsin constructed the prospect of the corporeal culture of the Aboriginal Pangcah People, and the dance has objectives of investigating the genuine meaning of dance. Syman Rapongan was then invited on stage to give his opening keynote entitled “Heterotopia: We Live on Different Planets”, with Dr. Lin Yatin as his moderator. The lost vernacular and mythological philosophy will then be a disoriented national evocation. Heterotopia is introduced because the heterogeneous civilization of our nation exists in itself – a complex matter not easily comprehended by conventional society or academia.

EMBODYING LOCAL KNOWLEDGES
Critical Ecologies Symposium
in collaboration with
Wanwu Practice Group
12-13 Nov. 2021

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Room 211
Research Bldg.



For Panel 1: USSR-from Translation to Interpretation, TNUA professors Chiang Min- Chin Kay, Tu Wei-Cheng, and doctoral student Chuang Kuo-Hsin were invited to share their experiences in engaging with local communities through personal endeavors, with Dr. Chang I-Wen as their moderator. Moreover, the speakers investigate how art can assist in the preservation of cultural heritage, and transformation of local wisdom into contemporary elucidation. They also share the possible dilemmas that may transpire in this field of practice.

Panel 2: Ecologies, Value Systems and Embodied Knowledge is an interactive panel that promotes a critical discourse on how value systems are represented, the significance of knowledge exchange through narratives, and the involvement of the participants in experiential endeavors. The speakers of this panel Dr. Andrea Flores Urushima (Moderator/Kyoto Seika University), Heather Barnett (University of the Arts London), Jennifer Louise Teeter (Kyoto Seika University), and Ayako Fujieda (Kyoto Seika University) motivated the participants to alter viewpoints, especially from minorities such as non-human or indigenous ones.

Panel 3: Maritime Made Manifest disclose some of the history and latest trends of maritime identities from speakers Dr. Anna Grasskamp (Hong Kong Baptist University), Charity Edwards (Monash University), and Dr. Mohd Anis Md Nor (Nusantara Performing Arts Research Centre), with Dr. Joëlle Bitton (Zürich University of the Arts) as their moderator. Within enormous geopolitical and hazy logistical conditions; society is (re)discovering the stakes of maritime command and exploitation, and its effect on our culture and ecologies.

Panel 4: Improwild! A Workshop on Knowledge Exchange through Improvisation explores the probability of knowledge exchanges in improvising through drawing. Accordingly, Per-forming as constructing forms creates knowledge; and improvising these forms challenges how visual arts are commonly employed. The speakers Prof. Michael Simon (Zürich University of the Arts), Susan Van Esch (HKU University of the Arts Utrecht), Prof. Dr Patricia Ribault (Beaux-Arts de Paris), and moderator Nuria Kraemer (Zürich University of the Arts) motivate the participants to experiment on what it signifies and does to society.

Agenda

Day One 12 Nov.

- 15:00-15:15 —Performance: Pangcah ilisin Dance and Sakero by Kuo-hsin Chuang Pangcah Dance Theatre
—A Welcome from President Kai-huang Chen, TNUA
—Introduction by Symposium Chair, Dr. Yatin Lin
- 15:15-16:15 Opening Keynote:
Heterotopia: We Live on Different Planets by Syaman Rapongan
- 16:15-16:20 *break*
- 16:20-17:40 Panel 1:
TNUA University Social Responsibility Project (USR)—
from Translation to Interpretation
- 17:40-17:50 *break*
- 17:50-19:10 Panel 2:
Ecologies, Value Systems and Embodied Knowledge
- 19:10-19:20 *break*
- 19:20-20:40 Panel 3:
Maritime Made Manifest

Agenda

Day Two 13 Nov.

- 15:00-16:20 Panel 4:
Improwild! A workshop on Knowledge Exchange
through Improvisation
- 16:20-16:30 *break*
- 16:30-17:50 Panel 5:
#togetherforourplanet-Responding to COP26
- 17:50-18:00 *break*
- 18:00-19:20 Panel 6:
In The Twilight - Cultural Ecology and Technology
- 19:20-19:30 *break*
- 19:30-20:40 Closing Keynote:
The Life is Wild by Ailton Alves
Lacerda Krenak
- 20:40-20:42 Closing by Symposium Chair,
Dr. Yatin Lin

Taking the COP26 hashtag #togetherforourplanet as an inducement; speakers Dr. Eva Verhoeven, Naomi Bulliard, and moderator Heather Barnett, all from the University of the Arts London, encouraged other perspectives in the discussion which became a form of unprotest. Through examination, scrutiny, non-linguistic discourse and speculation; Panel 5: #togetherforourplanet—Responding to COP26 (Workshop) aim to evoke nature’s viewpoint, and become spokespersons who empower disparate voices that are under-represented. Moreover, the panel intends to transpose the focus from humans to what other species and the ecology have to say – calling for a non-human unprotest.

Panel 6: In the Twilight - Cultural Ecology and Technology addresses accounts on how society may visualize the worlds of tomorrow, which is moderated by Andreas Kohli (Zürich University of the Arts). Dr. Joëlle Bitton (Zürich University of the Arts) looks at machine forms of “intelligence”, and how society attributes to its independence and soulfulness. As for Oulimata Gueye (Senegalese-French critic and curator), she reveals how local knowledge could usher in new accounts, ideas, and affiliations. Gueye also addresses queries regarding the African continent in the formation of future histories.

For the Closing Keynote: *The Life is Wild*, Ailton Krenak (Brazilian Indigenous Writer/Journalist) calls the participants to summon life and command the track of this planet which has become human-centric. Appropriately, he declares that culture is not constructed by humans; and that humans must reconcile its affinity with Earth's ecology. Krenak urges us to visualize a planet disparate from the one that our have constructed. Furthermore, he invites the participants to learn how to fit humbly into the Earth's topography. This panel was moderated and translated by Dr. Andrea Flores Urushima.

by Winna Go

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*“We live on different
planets.”*

—Syaman Rapongan

Despite sharing a kindred ecology, our civilization lives on a multitude of planets. This is the provoking statement that Syaman Rapongan declared in commencing the entirety of the Critical Ecologies Symposium. Due to the pandemic, physical gatherings such as the symposium have become arduous and uncommon. Accordingly, society's relation to time and space has been disrupted; thus, preventing everyone from gathering together in one physical venue. To exemplify, this particular symposium became a hybrid one—with those in Taiwan attending the physical event, and the participants from shared campus attending online. Thus, the distance brought about by the pandemic, due to the lockdowns and border restrictions, already made us feel as if we are living on different planets.

Aside from the new normal, another topic that was touched upon has something to do with cultural differences and beliefs. Syaman recalled a childhood memory that he had with a teacher from mainland China. It was 1965 at Lanyu Island, and the teacher asked whether the sun sets into the mountain or the sea. According to the Chinese textbook, the correct answer was that the sun sets into the mountain. However, in Syaman's homeland, the people witness the sun setting into the sea daily. With this, the diversity of our cultural perspectives and surroundings made it possible for the sun to set over the



mountain, the sea, the shell, the buildings, and even under the tree. Thus, we all describe the planet that we live on based on our distinct viewpoints and positionalities of how we regard the culture, the environment, the economy, politics, and many more. This is where Heterotopia was introduced. Syaman then recalled the time when he was rewarded with a literary award called the Heterosophia Literary Prize. This is because of the distinctive nature of his writing brought about by his hybrid cultural background; thus, Japanese and Taiwanese literature critics had mixed reactions and feedback towards his writing. Initially, Taiwanese critics thought that Syaman's mother tongue was Chinese; but the concept of his piece was foreign in Taiwanese literature. It is the first writing in Chinese that talks about the intimate relationship between human beings and the sea, the tides, and the fishes.

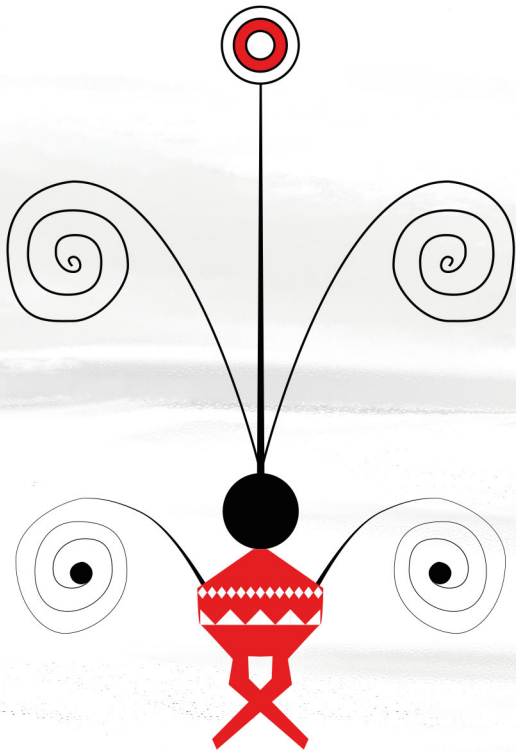
For Syaman, his works take inspiration from the coexistence of human beings and nature – how the minority situates themselves with the majority, and the difficulties they encounter along the way. The major question: did our civilization tame the environment, or was it the other way around? Two boats were then shown—one made by a multitude of navigators, and the other one made by Syaman and his son. According to Syaman, the sea travellers used to navigate

around the sea, for almost ten days, by solely relying on the constellations. However, this tradition and knowledge are withering away due to the advancement of technology. A true shame indeed—since their ancestors passed down the knowledge of this tradition for a reason. Thus, Syaman made sure to bring up his son around the heterogeneous knowledge and culture that his ancestors left. This is not just textbook-based, but learning it from first-hand experiences. For the indigenous people in Taiwan, boat making became an important cultural practice that is deeply rooted in centuries of history and tradition. To exemplify, Syaman tells a story of how their community would hold a ceremony for collecting wood since this material is considered to have its spirit. Aside from this, the legend of the Blackfin Flying Fish is highly respected. In short, Syaman's community believes in animism and would pay respect to nature—mainly the sea, the sky, and the flying fishes. In juxtaposition to what Christianity believes in, Syaman's community would pray to nature and would consider the beach as their place of worship. Oftentimes, they pray for peaceful tides to successfully catch fishes.

Going back to the concept of disparate worlds, not everyone is made to fit in the grand narrative forged by the majority. For instance, it is a natural phenomenon to have four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and



winter; but not all places experience the same thing. For tropical countries, only dry and wet seasons exist. In other words, the grand narrative may be the standard truth to the majority; but minor accounts should also be acknowledged. As aforementioned, the heterogeneous nature of culture, language, and beliefs make the notion of living on different planets possible. According to Syaman, out of all the Austronesian cultures – it is only their community that divides the seasons into the season of catching flying fish. These three seasons are rayoun or catching flying fish season (Feb. to Jun.); teiteika or end of the flying fish season (Jun. to Oct.); and amyan or waiting for the flying fish season (Oct. to Feb.). As for counting the days, the community uses the position of the moon about each passing night; rather than referring to the days using numerals. The names of the moon include samurang (auspicious night), matazing (mid-tide), tasanganai (high tide), matazing (mid-tide), and kabuhen (high tide). In the lunar calendar, the samurang, the tasanganai, and the kabuhen are the most important; because these days showcase the new and full moon. As such, these nights are considered the most dangerous; whereas marine life is at its richest. Even in terms of direction, the community depends on the environment as their point of reference. To exemplify, the beach is considered the center, whereas the mountain points to the north. When the Northwestern wind blows, people on their manual



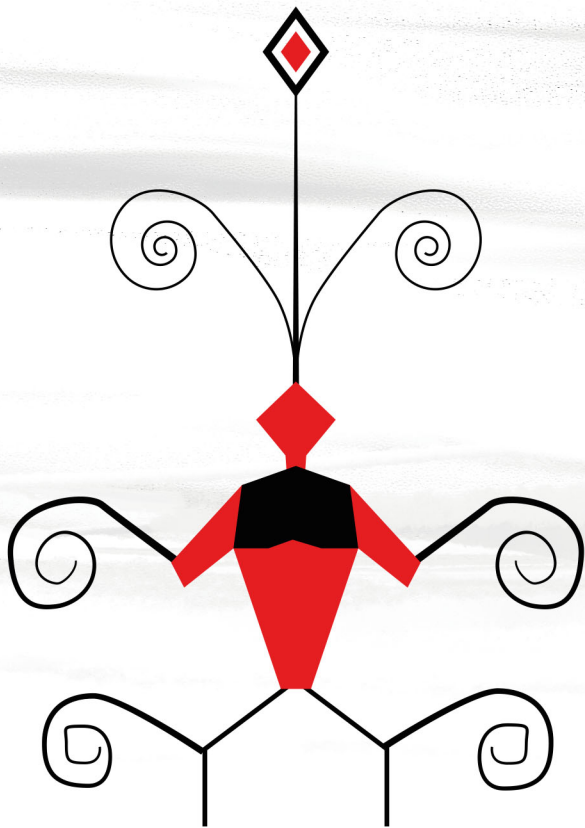


boats start to head back to the shore because that is where the wind leads them to. All of these underline the intimate relationship that the community has with nature, most especially with the sea.

By traversing from one planet to the other; we must keep in mind that each environment has its distinct knowledge, interpretation of the ecology, and local practices. Accordingly, the diversity brought about by culture, environment, and humanity makes the universe more fascinating. In Syaman's community, the fish that they consume depends on the individual eating it. For women, they eat fishes that are more colorful and graceful; whereas the fishes for men are relatively unattractive and pungent. According to Syaman, this denotes the deep respect that their culture has for women. Moreover, not only do the constellations signify directions; but it also indicates the good season in harvesting flying fishes. Correspondingly, the Scorpio (mina sasadangan), around February to May, with a lot of stars near its tail signify the abundance of the flying fish. At present, the advancement of technology and globalization are the main causes of the eradication of this indigenous knowledge and practices. For Syaman, he tries his best to preserve the knowledge passed down by his ancestors by continuously practicing it with his son. Due to the influence of global superpowers; smaller cultures and indigenous

knowledge dwindle into a weaker voice. Thus, the ongoing domestication of the minorities contributes to the diminishment of the world that they live in. In conclusion, Syaman proclaims that science has taken the enigma out of everything; therefore, the lack of mystery equates to the absence of beauty and death of a sort. However, the world has an innumerable amount of mysteries that even science could not unravel and explain. With our predisposition of being insatiably inquisitive; there is no stopping us from continuously advancing, and reinventing ourselves. Ultimately, human beings have the power to make a difference; and it is up to us to make the proper decisions for the betterment of our ecology and civilization.

by Winna Go



An abstract painting featuring a dense, textured composition of vibrant red and yellow-orange brushstrokes. The strokes are thick and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The background is a dark, almost black, which makes the bright colors stand out. There are also some smaller, scattered strokes of blue and green, adding to the complexity of the artwork.

from
Translation
to
Interpretation

The first panel of this symposium presented about the University Social Responsibility (USR) of Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA) — from Translation to its Interpretation. Three guest speakers were invited in order to share their personal engagement with contemporary art and social issues. Dr. Min-Chin Kay Chiang, a professor from the Graduate Institute of Architecture and Cultural Heritage at TNUA, was the first one to give a talk on the Interpretation of Indigenous Crafts Heritage. Her presentation was based on the Cultural Heritage course offered last year. In this course, heritage interpretation was divided into three dimensions: (1) cultural tourism and sustainable development; (2) heritage education; and (3) the transformation of traditional arts. The class then spent three days in the Gulou community of Pingtung. During this time frame, the graduate students underwent an intensive workshop offered by Master Ljumiyang herself — a Paiwan weaver who is considered a national living treasure of Taiwan. Throughout the trip, Ljumiyang taught the class how to harvest and process Ramie which will be used for weaving. Not only does the Paiwan weaving system reflect technical mastery; but it also highlights the tribe's relation to the land, their traditional knowledge of farming and lifestyle. Thus, weaving patterns, accompanied by songs and storytelling, became the vernacular of preserving Paiwan knowledge. Ljumiyang still



teaches her apprentices, including our class, the Paiwan song of weaving. In the past, this technique was used by weavers to reinforce the precision of their craft.

At the time of the trip, Ljumiyang was just announced as the bearer of National Significance in Traditional Craft. Her designation represents the widened recognition of indigenous heritage under the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law. The main challenges of her appointment came from the intervention of local politics, the discourse of academic scholars, and the predicaments concerning translation. The other issue is related to vernacular and bodily sense. In the past, the Paiwan tribe lived in Dawu Mountain, and called themselves “People of the Slope”. This is why a multitude of weaving patterns showcase the bodily experience of Paiwanese on the mountains. Unfortunately, this type of pattern has deteriorated due to the displacement of the community caused by politics and natural disasters. As a result of colonialism and contemporary imperialism, the continuity of Paiwan oral tradition is disoriented. The richness of its culture has greatly deteriorated; and only a few Paiwanese are fluent in their language. Ljumiyang often expresses her apprehensions, especially during instances wherein she has to explain her culture in Mandarin. As a call to action, the class was divided into

three groups. The students worked closely with Ljumiyang and her apprentices in order to develop projects that would educate society about the beauty of Paiwan culture and weaving. In 2019, Ljumiyang published her first book on Paiwan weaving. This is a refreshing perspective because it comes from an insider's perspective, covering the technical terms used in indigenous weaving. Oftentimes, the knowledge of indigenous weaving is based on colonial and academic viewpoints. Thus, the immersive learning from Ljumiyang, in her locality, revealed the importance of recognizing contextualized humanistic knowledge. This should serve as a reminder for heritage interpreters, such as ourselves, the hierarchy of value, the sensitivity of indigenous heritage interpretation, and the need of an alternative apart from a grand narrative.

Dr. Chiang's enlightening presentation was followed by the inspiring River Aesthetics Art Initiation Project of Prof. Tu Wei-Cheng from the Fine Arts Department of TNUA. His team comprises himself and his students. As an art worker, Prof. Tu's creation focuses on combining fiction and civilizational sites in relation to anthropology, paleontology, and museology. Accordingly, his project adapts the mobile classroom method, offering courses on Service-learning and Aesthetic, Specialty Education, Sprout Education Plan, and USR.



This aims to motivate students to step out of campus under the framework of an unconventional learning space, allowing students to cultivate a sense of participatory social responsibility. According to Prof. Tu, students are in a momentous phase because of their mobility, and curiosity when it comes to diverse media and art processes. Thus, River Aesthetics aims to preserve what could be considered as ‘aimlessness’, ‘lack of incentive’ or ‘reflexivity’ in art. Correspondingly, the nature of their events are always action-based. One of their art events was called a March Plan. This links a series of areas through the act of marching – departing from school and marching all the way to Hobe Fort in Tamsui. In this process, the participants get to simultaneously engage with the community and art. The group also organized a trip to Heping Island in Keelung. The goal was to explore the archaeological revelation of Spanish colonization in Taiwan. This was realized through a pop-up container exhibition, accompanied by explanatory signs that ushered the spectators in a self-guided tour. Overall, the artist group stresses three correlated factors: (1) importance of art education through communicative and immersive acts; (2) learning art through corporeal participation in the community; and (3) the collaborative relationship of artists to the community, market, and environment. Ultimately, River Aesthetics believe that art is commencement; and this became the spirit of their action plans.





Lastly, Chuang Kuo-shin presented on the transition of the Pakalungay culture of A'tolan into Dance. The case study chosen was Bulareyuang's "Not Afraid of the Sun and Rain". In 2014, Bulareyaung Pagarlava established his own dance company with the goal of showcasing his choreography, and Taiwan indigenous culture on the global stage. Not Afraid of the Sun and Rain was created through Bulareyuang's knowledge of the Amis age-class organization; thus translating his comprehension of Amis' culture into modern dance. This wasn't a simple feat since he's Paiwanese, which is divergent from the Pakalungay on A'tolan Amis of Taitung. This is why the piece showcased the community's affinity with ecology; and the affairs concerning identity and cultural transmission. Moving on to the topic of Pakalungay's transition into a performative form, several pointers have been made. After the debut of Not Afraid of the Sun and Rain, many critics suggest the influence of Pakalungay in its choreography. It was also noted that Pakalungay culture and values were reproduced through fieldwork with A'tolan youths. What attracted Bulareyaung to this culture was him witnessing the Pakalungays' engagement in labour work during an A'tolan festival. When Pakalungays are exhausted from their training, the older members would hold their hands and sing lyrics including the phrase "Not Afraid of the Sun and Rain".

In conclusion, the first panel delved into the plight of the indigenous people; and the importance of humanistic knowledge especially for heritage interpreters. This is also applicable to art as learning art should include corporeal participation. Indigenous people living in the contemporary world have to confront the grapple between traditional and contemporary lifestyles, persistent oppression, and the continuous struggle on migration and movements. This is a ceaseless pressure being passed down from one generation to the other. At the end of the day, being inclusive and respectful to subcultures and minorities are bare minimums that can go a long way.

by Winna Go





photo: Cultural Affairs Bureau of Pingtung County

A photograph of a traditional thatched-roof building, likely a rural structure, with a steeply pitched roof made of straw or reeds. The walls are also made of similar natural materials, possibly mud or woven reeds. The building is situated in a grassy field with trees in the background. The entire image has a warm, sepia-toned color palette. The text "Four stories..." is overlaid in a white, italicized serif font in the lower right quadrant.

Four stories...

The second panel of this symposium was moderated by Andrea Urushima, a lecturer from Kyoto Seika University. The main goal of the panel was to urge the participants to collectively muse on how they view and live on this planet. One important point emphasized was the infinite ways of understanding the world, and adjusting our actions accordingly. Our relationship with ecology, and our corporeal engagement is embedded in an interconnected system of values. These systems then morph the way humans connect with other species, the community and ecology. The speakers joining Urushima include her fellow colleagues Ayako Fujieda and Jennifer Teeter, and Heather Barnett from the University of the Arts London. The main queries of this panel surround human interaction with its ecology, and how cultures of resilience are born in local environments.



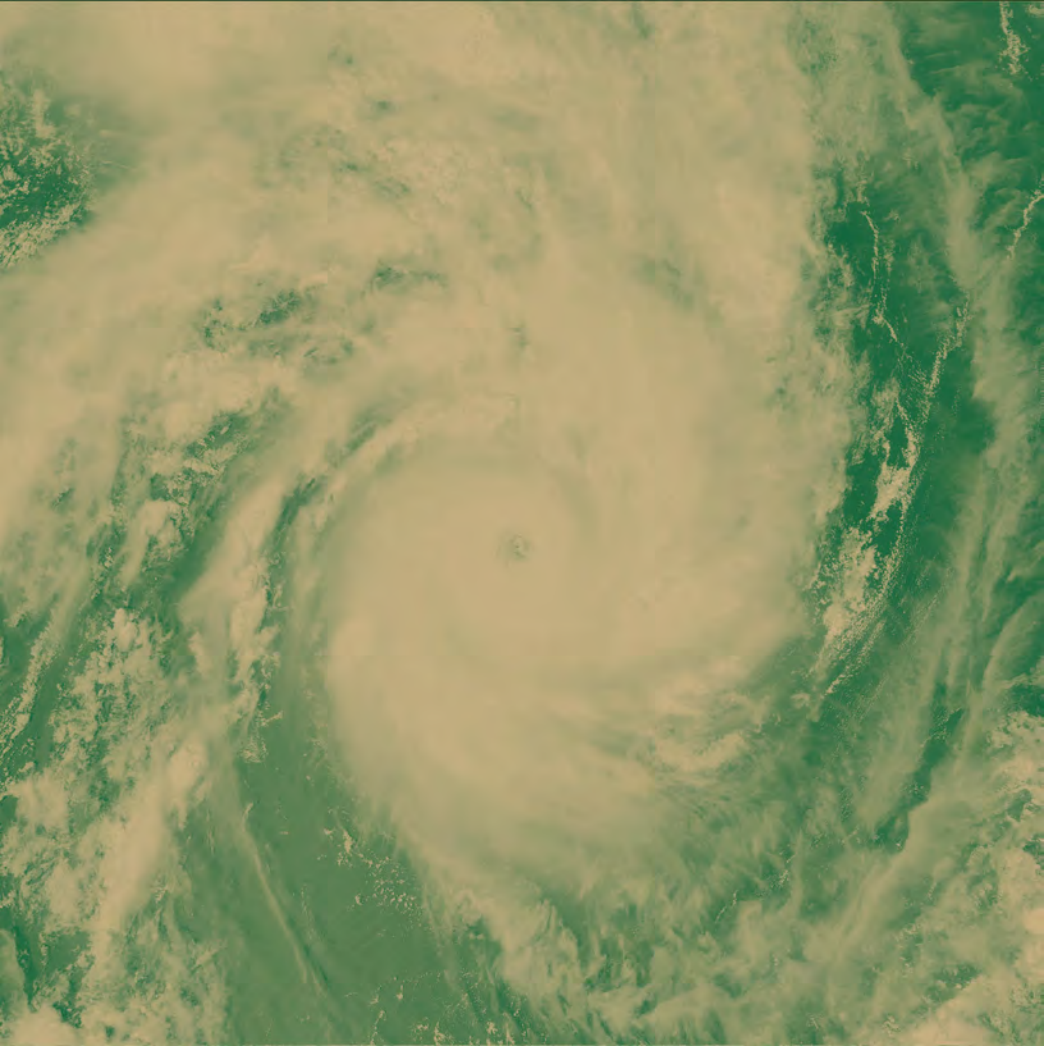
The first presenter was Heather Barnett – a professor at UAL, and an artist working with living systems and imaging technologies. Her presentation was entitled “Compostulations: The Interconnectedness of Living Things and the Value of Noticing”, which adopted a more interactive approach. To start off, the participants were encouraged to wander around their ecology in order to observe other living forms. The main goal was to put oneself in the shoes of other creatures. As human beings, we never stop viewing the world from our own subjectivity and senses. However, we can take the time to contemplate in order to shift our perceptions to other creatures living in our shared world. For Barnett, the pandemic caused a slow still and postponement of projects and travels; so she shifted her attention to her small urban garden in London. During this period, she has been observing species, alongside the processes of transformation, opportunism, territorial battles, and resilience. An example of which is the compost bin in Barnett’s backyard. She observed the cycles of waste management as the worms and microbes convert food scraps into compost. As time passed by, an ant colony took residence in the bin. A conflict arose when Barnett had to intervene in order to use the compost. Despite the disruptive human intervention, the ants were able to find their way back, and rebuild their nursery

chambers. Zooming out of the compost bin and thinking on a larger scale of habitats, we can learn more from complex interspecies negotiations. Humans are only one amongst 8.7 million living species on this planet. The key to a successful collective existence involves how we value other forms of life, how we recognize and measure that value, and how we engage in reciprocal negotiations with other living beings.

The next presenter was Andrea Urushima on “The Traditional Silviculture Knowledge in the North of Kyoto”, which is coming from the perspective of a forester and his relationship with trees. The story revolves around the Kitayama Sugi – a type of wood developed in the Northern Mountains of Kyoto 400 years ago. This used to be an expensive product utilized in the construction of traditional architecture. Back then, Kitayama Sugi could only be produced in the said location. The special shape of its landscape is rooted in the accumulated knowledge of planting, pruning, barking, cutting, and polishing of the said tree. This is a painstaking process, requiring skilled workers who have trained for a multitude of years, carrying the knowledge of their ancestors. Nowadays, foresters can’t sell this kind of wood because of its mass production. Thus, the current youth is not interested in the



embodied knowledge and the toilsome process that comes with it. If this perseveres, then the knowledge would cease to exist. Urushima's story is then continued by Ayako Fujieda – a fellow lecturer at Kyoto Seika University. Her story was about the community living on the remote island of Vanuatu, and how these people live with cyclones. Vanuatu is a country located in the South Pacific Ocean, with a diverse culture accompanied by more than 130 local languages – English, French and Bislama being its national languages. It is also known as the country with the highest risk of natural disasters. Despite the adversities, Vanuatu is surprisingly the happiest country in the world. Last 2015, the country was hit by the largest cyclone yet. The establishments and farmlands were severely damaged, with more than half of its population affected. In a village at Tana, where Fujieda used to study, 80 percent of the houses were devastated; but no fatalities were reported and the recovery of the community was swift. The secret behind this lies in several factors such as the existence of traditional houses called “Nimalatan” or Cyclone Shelter. The Nimalatan were able to endure the great destruction thanks to the wood materials utilized, accompanied by the local attested knowledge reinforced on the structures. After the cyclone's wrath, the community started to replant their fields and reconstruct their




ravaged homes. Overall, Vanuatu's resilience is established on the solid foundation of its social communal system, constructed environment, natural system, and self-sufficiency in resources.

“ko te aroha anō he wai, e pupū ake ana, he awa e mānūpuna mai ana, i roto i te whatu-manawa...(my love is like water continually bubbling up a spring that will keep flowing from within your soul...)” – this beautiful song was sung by Jennifer Teeter as an introduction to “Recentering Indigenous Knowledge: Perspectives from My Experiences in Ainu Mosir”. In 2012, Teeter learned the song during her Aotearoa / Ainumosir exchange program between Ainu and Modi. Ainu are an indigenous people in Japan, whereas Modi are from Aotearoa — now called New Zealand due to colonization. At present, colonial practices persist in academic institutions as it is designed and led by colonizers; while the discourtesy towards indigenous people prevail. Teeter's first story was about an Ainu woman named Amichi Shimada who led an exchange program that relied solely on crowdfunding and the generosity of a Modi host. Thanks to this initiative, other programs inspired by Shimada's work were established; encouraging the Modi to travel to Ainumosir while the Ainu visited Aotearoa. At present, these programs are focused on language revitalization, indigenous led



schools, leadership development, political rights, and economic empowerment. The next story took place in a university at Hokkaido, where panels were invited to present. An Ainu person also took part but was marginalized from the decision-making processes. This represents the continuous objectification and disregard towards indigenous people. Sadly, most Ainu related classes across the globe are not being taught by Ainu people. The final story is about a North American journalist who utilized a photo of an Ainu for his speaking tour poster. Clearly, the journalist used a random photo he found, without even asking for permission from the owner of the photograph. This is blatant impertinence, especially coming from a place that aims to recenter indigenous values. Overall, indigenous people should not only be given a seat at the table, but they should be making the table as well.

All four speakers may have shared different narratives, but they all have a commonality and that's giving voices to minorities. This may take the form of recognizing that humans coexist with other forms of life, sharing of local embodied knowledge such as the Kitayama Sugi and Nimalatan, or by advocating for the rights of indigenous people. Researching on a subject matter, without



involving the concerned in the active process, is a hypocritical move that would only benefit the institution of power. According to Teeter, people who are in the position of authority must do what they can so that minorities are given equal rights. In the progressive future, indigenous people should be given leadership roles that will help shape the programs in universities and beyond – especially on subject matters related to indigenous studies.

by Winna Go

*Maritime Made
Manifest*

The third panel of this symposium was moderated by Joëlle Bitton, a lecturer from the Zürich University of the Arts. This panel explored a man's relationship with the material world, and the origin of things. It explores not just destruction, but also the construction of arts, culture, international relationships, and transmission of knowledge over time. All of which are made possible due to trade and the exchange of goods. Accordingly, three speakers, who are experts on this particular field, shared an enriching talk on the maritime ecosystem. This made the participants travel to three different countries namely Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Australia.

The first presenter was Anna Grasskamp who is an assistant professor at the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University. Her topic is about the material culture in Chinese contemporary art. She reflected on the viewpoint of art historian Lothar Ledderose, who asserted that mass production is a pivotal element of Chinese culture, as this permits the efficient production of materials. Consequently, this contradicts the contemporary emphasis on individuality. To exemplify, Ai Weiwei's Bowl of Pearls showcases a porcelain bowl filled with thousands of pearls – both are classic Chinese industrialization goods. The artist

*“mass production is a
pivotal element of Chinese
culture”*

—Lothar Ledderose

affirmed that the open reciprocity of ideas is feasible due to the accessibility of contemporary resources and technologies; thus, individuality comes from one's aptness to adapt to new conditions. Going back to the artwork, pearls are an outcome of organic processes; but human involvement makes it possible for it to mass propagate. In the case of Ai's pearls, as well as Warhol's Brillo boxes and Duchamp's urinal which are all ready-made; it is not the objects, but the white cubes such as museums that define an object's meaning and worth. Institutional frameworks then elevate the readymades into a work of art – magnifying its value far beyond the imaginable. Another example is the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. Curator Norman Ford's point of departure was focused on the predicament of national representation. Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix, known as MAP Office, were among the artists to represent Hong Kong. The work entitled *The Parrot's Tale* took inspiration from a poem of 1918 Rabindranath Tagore, which is an allegory on the significance of individuality and autonomy. Ergo, it describes the bird as liking a sense of decorum: "alluring yet impudent" "enlightened yet ignorant" – a beguiling paradox. Similar to a parrot that memorized expressions of a vernacular far from its own; MAP Office utilizes phrases adopted from the official vernacular to express the oyster powder

transfer – a memorial of the 1997 Hong Kong handover to China. The installation of MAP Office and Hong Kong’s photographed island depict territories and the memory of lost men; all believed to have linked various continents and periods during the endeavor of expanding Hong Kong’s territory. Eloquent in the vernacular of arts and ecology, matter and allegorical phrases reveal newer means of comprehending the planet beyond accounts of genesis or affinity. It is ultimately concealed by our consciousness of how we form matter, and the ways matter finally forms us.

The next presenter was Dr. Mohd Anis Md Nor who is an adjunct professor at Sunway University School of Arts. His presentation led his audiences on a “Journey Along the Maritime Silk Route: Crafting Malay Zapin from Hadhramaut to the Malay Peninsula.” He started off by introducing the Spice Routes, also known as Maritime Roads, which connected the Oriental and the Occidental and invigorated intercultural encounters. The ports along the Maritime Silk Roads served as confluences for ideas and knowledge, acclaiming intercultural exchanges into works of art, music, and dance. These encounters then brought about syncretized performances, traditions, and aesthetics. Performative is the ability to carry out encounters influenced by cross-cultural



Europe

Mediterranean Sea

Egypt

Arabia

Somalia

Persia

India

China

Indian Ocean

Java



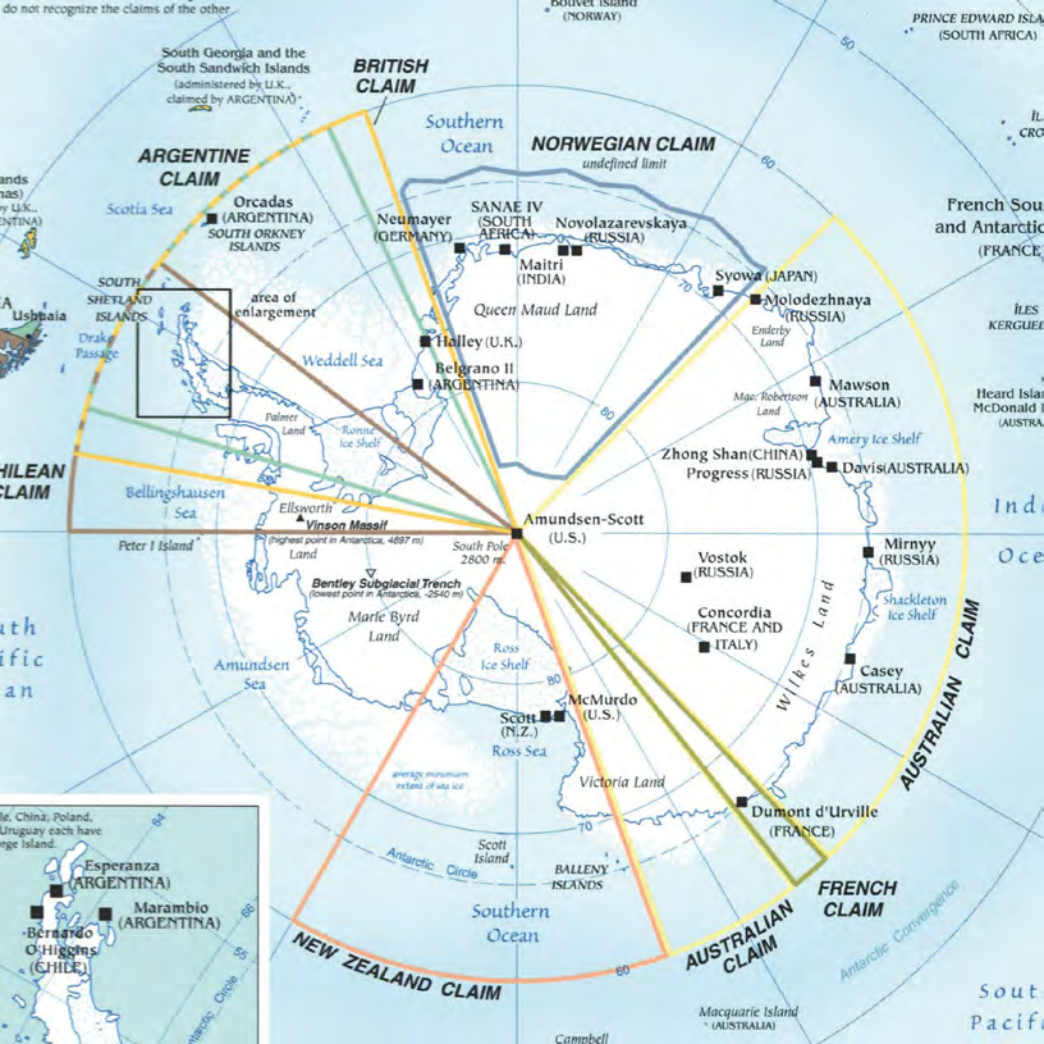
Arab-Malay Hybrid: Malay Zapin

phenomena of religiosity and pop culture. Along the Maritime Silk Route, Islamic contact led to new cultural metamorphosis in Southeast Asia. The Malay Zapin, a syncretized performative tradition, was invented by indigenous groups through their confrontations with Hadhrami Arabs from Hadhramaut. This then encapsulates the Arabic-Malay-Islamic nuances that are paradoxically secular and pious. At present, these undertakings proceed in a similar method that interculturalism appropriates, litters, and recalls memories along the Maritime and Spice Routes. Ultimately, the Maritime Silk Route is a channel for cross-cultural and religious exchanges. It gave birth to syncretized performance traditions throughout the regions in Southeast Asia. Moreover, it is intrinsically spiritual – accentuating the notion of self, the sense of being, and the idea of the soul personifying the contemporary and the hybrid traditions of the past.

The final presenter was Charity Edwards who is a lecturer at Monash University, and an architect-geographer who collaborates with artists and scientists. Her topic is about Submersive Subversive: Instruments of Safety Operating in White Spaces. To start off, Edwards mentioned that the Antarctic region is defined by wilderness imagery and techno-utopian speculations. Antarctic

humanities scholar Elizabeth Lean and non-fiction writers such as Kerry Christiani observed how the Southern Ocean is visualized as an extraterrestrial area through popular media. Such depictions elude the chronicle of its industrial operations. Oftentimes, the ocean becomes adorned in imperialism, hegemony, and capitalism. The Southern Ocean suffers from its remoteness and spatial structure; thus obscuring its urbanization. However, the automation of the sea is commended for its ability to enhance sustainable investigation, marine resource control and scientific research. However, collectivized intelligence engenders further legal and moral queries, and escalates the urbanization damage. According to Jessica Layman's study of global ocean politics, "the ocean is no longer the constitutive outside, but the center of government scrutiny." An urbanizing ocean that functions beyond human intervention prompts us to be mindful of technologies that assist vision in the jurisprudence of her own. Peril exists when AUVs have their data confounded with actual human perception. If society were to entrust the freedom of data collection to other figures, then we may better comprehend the unforeseen inference of urban operations. The succeeding stage tackles the Southern Ocean through the detachment of delineation from its fabrication. What transpires from this research is fragmented

do not recognize the claims of the other



proof that in the Southern Ocean, a series of urbanization is functioning at the convergence of scrutiny; that is, AUV and sensor imagery, and ventures reported as planetary conjecture. What is accentuated are operations in isolated areas that reestablish attention towards the expansion of underwater vehicles, and drone swarms. Thus, the urban and the ocean are interconnected, and employed though mainly obscured scale. Overall, this panel highlights society's correlation to the maritime – both distant and confidential – constructed from colossal myths, cultural encounters and merchandise trading, establishment of Empires, investigations of the abyss and of ecological ravages.

by Winna Go

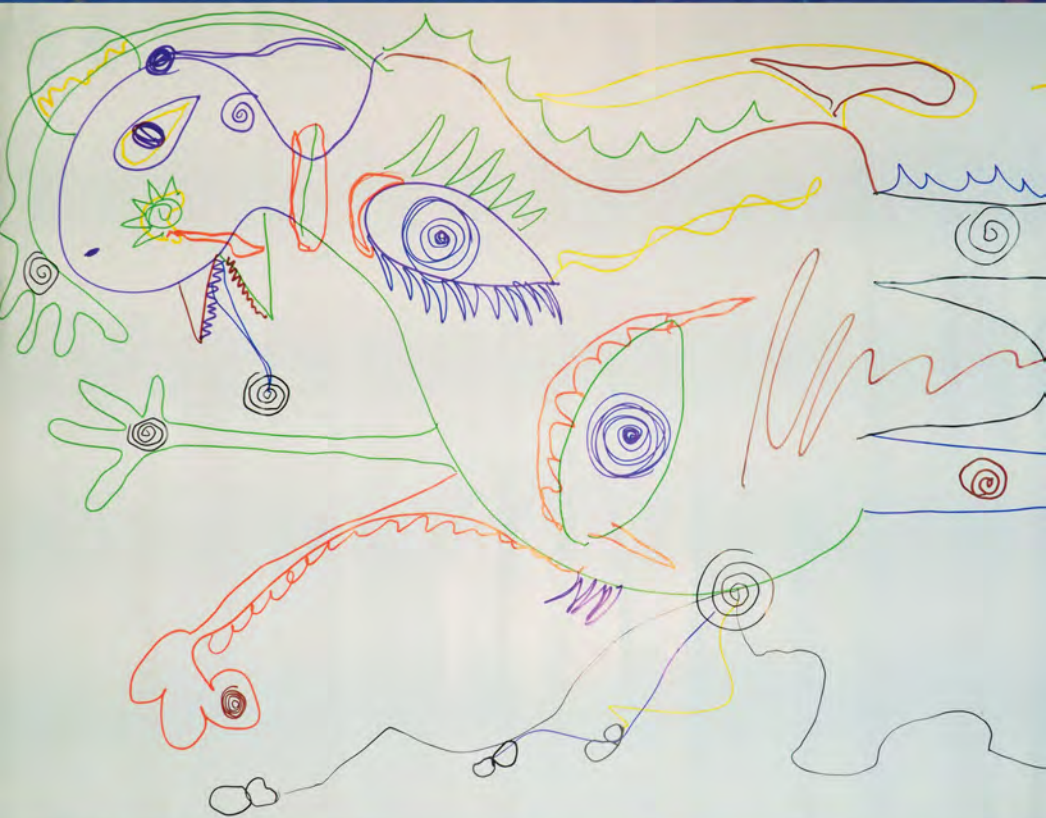


The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features a dark blue base color with various shades of green and yellow, suggesting a textured or layered surface. Overlaid on this are intricate white line drawings. These include a large, thin-lined circle that frames the central text. Inside and around this circle are various organic and geometric shapes: a starburst-like pattern, a circular shape with internal lines, and several elongated, curved forms that resemble leaves or petals. The overall aesthetic is artistic and somewhat ethereal.

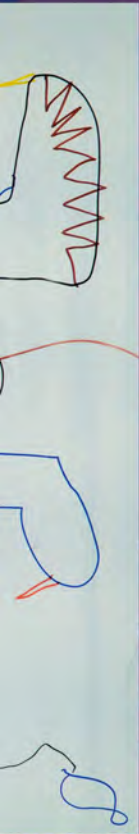
*A workshop on
Knowledge Exchange
through
Improvisation*

The fourth panel of this symposium was moderated by Nuria Krämer who works at Zürich University of the Arts. She comes from a mixed background that merges multimedia, scenography and transdisciplinary studies. The main goal of the panel was to highlight the use of improvisation in different fields of art and life — its potential in knowledge exchange. The speakers joining Krämer include Susan Van Esch who is an anthropologist based in the Netherlands, Michael Simon who teaches Master Stage Design at the Zürich University of the Arts, and Patricia Ribault who teaches Performative Design Research at the weißensee kunstschule Berlin and the Beaux-Arts de Paris.

To start, Van Esch shared her involvement in leading a master-degree program called “*Course of Creativity*” wherein they find creative and sustainable solutions, in a transdisciplinary manner, to address societal issues. Simon then presents the dilemmas of applying improvisation in theatre due to its traditional structure of hierarchy. Afterwards, Ribault got involved in the session through a pre-recorded video. This situation likewise calls for improvisation on the integration of her discussion into the entirety of the workshop. Ribault started with a case study of the eminent neurosurgeon Hugues Duffau regarding the structured



drawing from the workshop



manner of conducting his operations, waking his patients in the middle of the operation to establish a dialogue with them. Duffau intriguingly uses improvisation and lets his intuition take over in certain areas despite the seemingly rigid operational procedures. The neurosurgeon attentively listens to the nuances of his patients' responses and adjusts the flow of his procedure accordingly. Instead of a disorganized reaction, *Improvisation* takes the form of mastery in Duffau's gestures and results.

Accordingly, Ribault mentions how Christian Béthune in *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique* regards improvisation: "it's not so much a matter of producing forms like established forms, but to modulate figures by capturing something imperceptible to the other somehow." Another quote by Jean-Lui was raised which states that "the improviser is the one who gives voice to forces that are themselves imperceptible inaudible." Ribault then questions from the philosophical standpoint of improvisation in the field of visual arts, especially concerning this idea of oeuvre, or the prowess it takes in producing

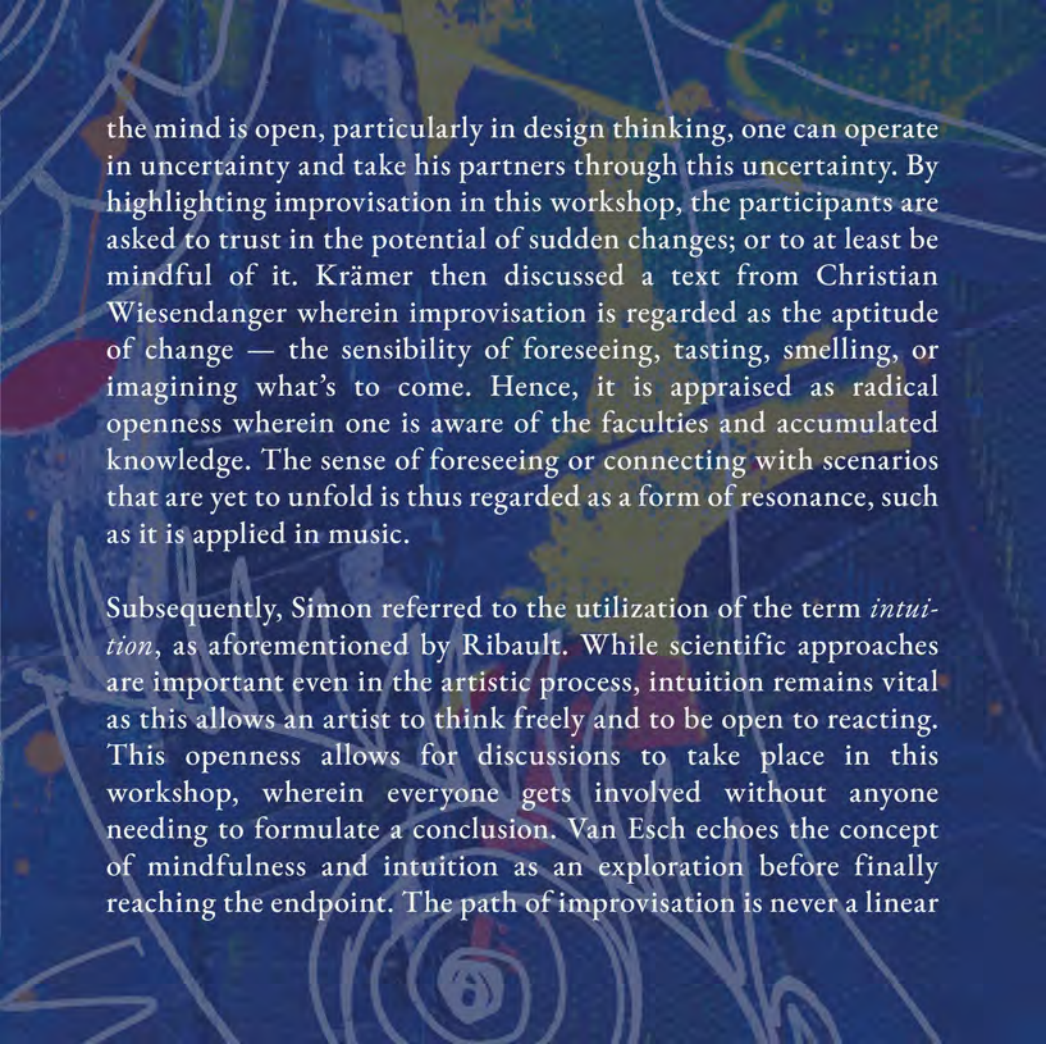
a masterpiece — may it be a painting or a sculpture, the artist is supposed to be in command. In the field of visual arts or even literature, the idea of improvising is not typically associated with that of producing a work of art.

Simon then introduces the concept of mindfulness as the basic necessity for improvisation. In creating music, we are required to listen to each other to provide a harmonious melody. In any form of improvisation, we need to be mindful of not just our communication process but also our ecological surroundings as a whole. Consequently, Van Esch relates the said mindfulness with the idea of intentional improvisation — by confronting a situation and reacting or improvising only when the mind is open. Thus, improvisation is seen as correlated to the power of our imaginations. When






drawing from the workshop



the mind is open, particularly in design thinking, one can operate in uncertainty and take his partners through this uncertainty. By highlighting improvisation in this workshop, the participants are asked to trust in the potential of sudden changes; or to at least be mindful of it. Krämer then discussed a text from Christian Wiesendanger wherein improvisation is regarded as the aptitude of change — the sensibility of foreseeing, tasting, smelling, or imagining what's to come. Hence, it is appraised as radical openness wherein one is aware of the faculties and accumulated knowledge. The sense of foreseeing or connecting with scenarios that are yet to unfold is thus regarded as a form of resonance, such as it is applied in music.

Subsequently, Simon referred to the utilization of the term *intuition*, as aforementioned by Ribault. While scientific approaches are important even in the artistic process, intuition remains vital as this allows an artist to think freely and to be open to reacting. This openness allows for discussions to take place in this workshop, wherein everyone gets involved without anyone needing to formulate a conclusion. Van Esch echoes the concept of mindfulness and intuition as an exploration before finally reaching the endpoint. The path of improvisation is never a linear



path of racing from point A to B. Rather, this becomes a trajectory that allows an individual to have flexibility towards change and to freely utilize their imagination. Moreover, there is room for open discussion wherein the possibility of formulating new bodies of knowledge through an exchange is made. Krämer reflected upon the A and B as undefined concepts such that a bottle can be perceived as a vase, a swimming pool for small beings, a head, and the like. Simon then shared his own experience in theatre design, where a sphere in the middle of a set didn't seem to achieve the effect they wanted. However, when the sphere was suspended and shown from its backside, it was able to portray a different and better facet. Ultimately, this became a fortunate accidental design.

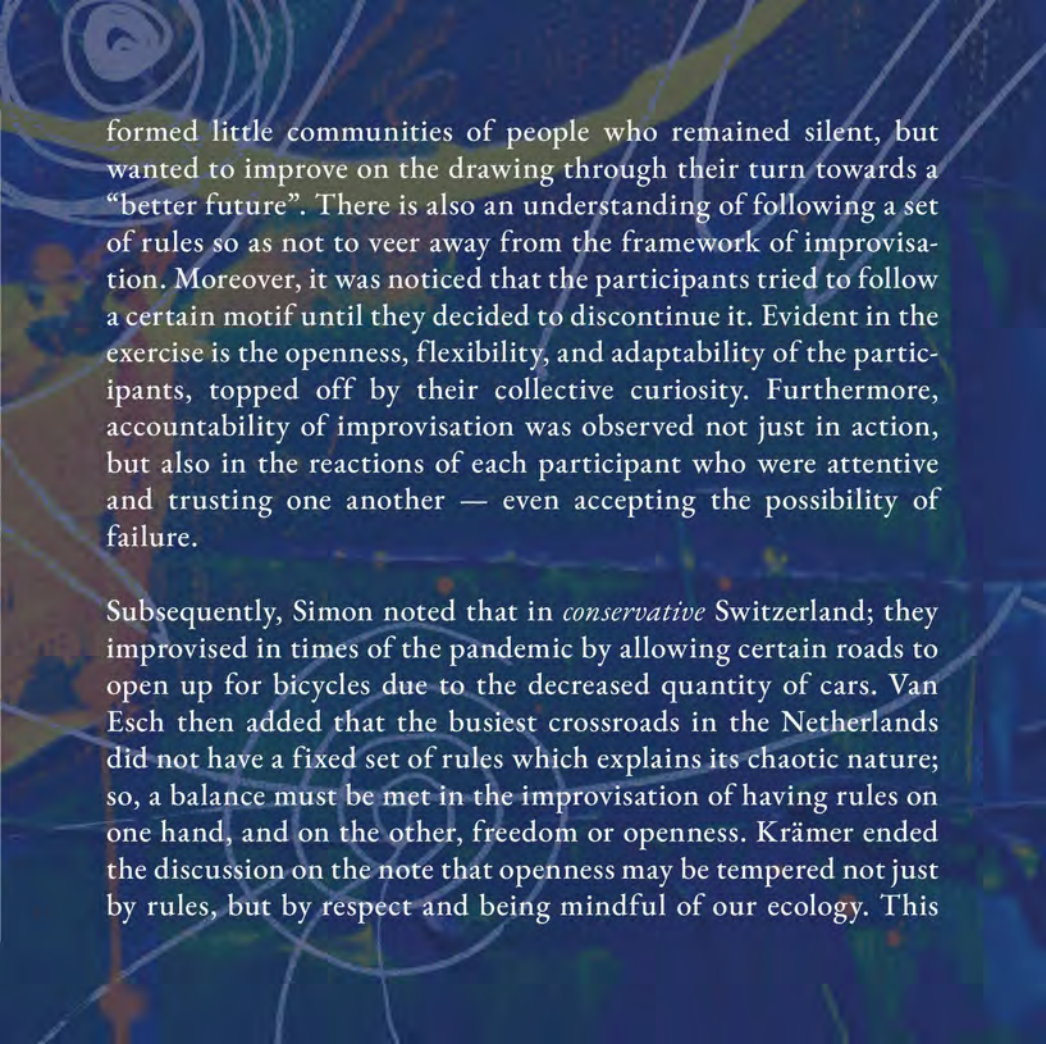
Van Esch regards improvisation as a tool for learning and a process. The learning is not solely reliant on openness and mindfulness, but also its state of vulnerability. Eventually, daring to make mistakes open up newer possibilities in acquiring knowledge. Thus, the learning and experience gained are reinstated in the process, and an individual enriches oneself every time. Krämer then improvised by presenting another video by Ribault, where she discusses a text by Marcel Mauss. This elaborated how a

person goes through the process of learning to master a technique in an artistic process, and that person then can adapt to new circumstances as a form of improvisation – especially in the artistic field. Simon related his own experience wherein he thought his stage design was perfect as the stage brimmed with word prop, but this limited his actors. Hence, they soon allowed the words to be put by the actors on the stage to set the mood. While the stage and choreography are often finalized due to their time-based nature, there should always be room for contingencies and changes. Flexibility is a powerful skill that should be taken into consideration.

Krämer then illustrated the paintings of Lemley and Low in connection to space in Hong Kong. Their paintings, overlapping with one another, were not only representations of the artist. As such, the artworks engaged in a dialogue with one another in relation to their space. The workshop then progressed as the participants were asked to be in dialogue with one another by drawing a particular line, one after another. The end goal was to achieve a complete drawing of an imaginary creature. The workshop

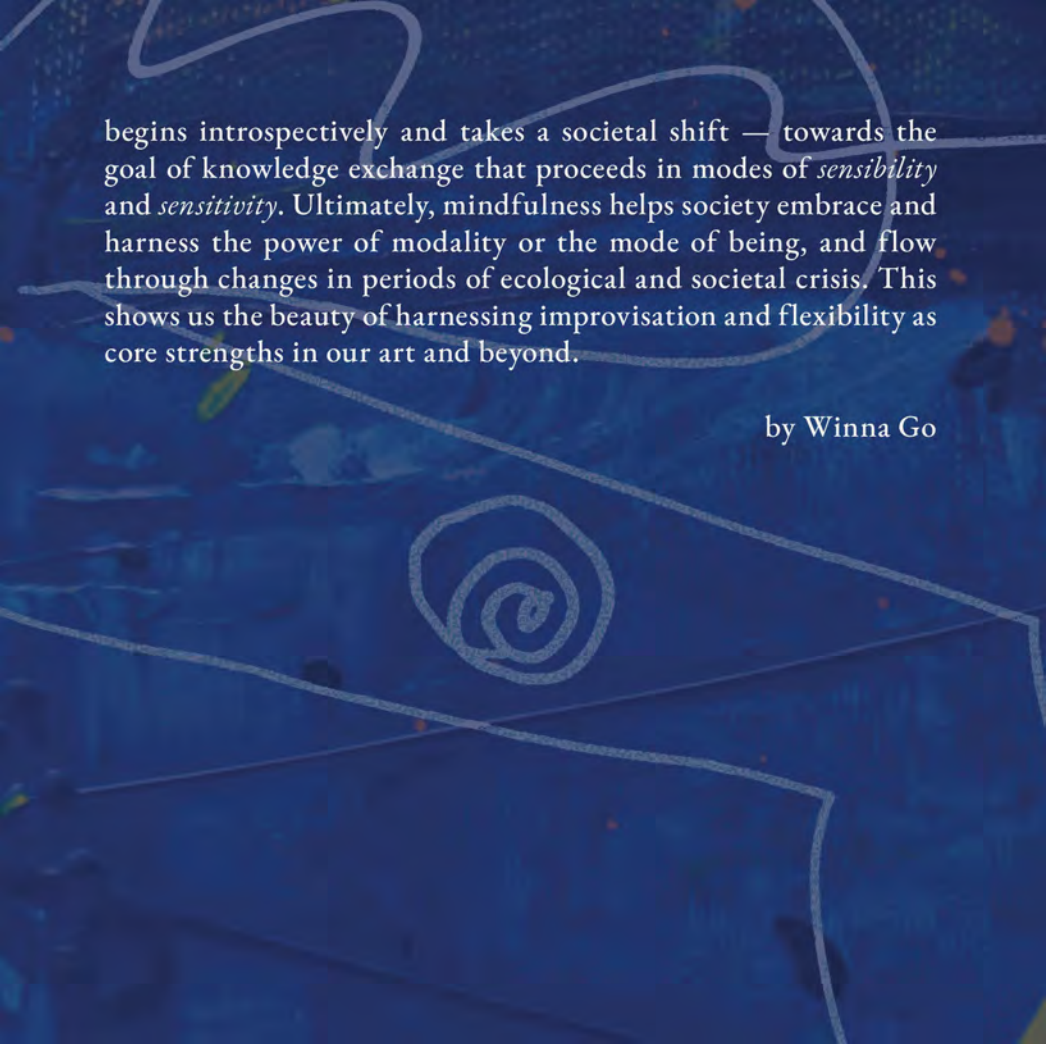


drawing from the workshop



formed little communities of people who remained silent, but wanted to improve on the drawing through their turn towards a “better future”. There is also an understanding of following a set of rules so as not to veer away from the framework of improvisation. Moreover, it was noticed that the participants tried to follow a certain motif until they decided to discontinue it. Evident in the exercise is the openness, flexibility, and adaptability of the participants, topped off by their collective curiosity. Furthermore, accountability of improvisation was observed not just in action, but also in the reactions of each participant who were attentive and trusting one another — even accepting the possibility of failure.

Subsequently, Simon noted that in *conservative* Switzerland; they improvised in times of the pandemic by allowing certain roads to open up for bicycles due to the decreased quantity of cars. Van Esch then added that the busiest crossroads in the Netherlands did not have a fixed set of rules which explains its chaotic nature; so, a balance must be met in the improvisation of having rules on one hand, and on the other, freedom or openness. Krämer ended the discussion on the note that openness may be tempered not just by rules, but by respect and being mindful of our ecology. This

The background is a dark blue, textured surface. It features several white, hand-drawn lines that form abstract shapes and a central spiral. The lines are somewhat irregular and organic in style. The spiral is located in the lower-middle part of the page. There are also some small, faint orange and yellow specks scattered across the blue background.

begins introspectively and takes a societal shift — towards the goal of knowledge exchange that proceeds in modes of *sensibility* and *sensitivity*. Ultimately, mindfulness helps society embrace and harness the power of modality or the mode of being, and flow through changes in periods of ecological and societal crisis. This shows us the beauty of harnessing improvisation and flexibility as core strengths in our art and beyond.

by Winna Go



Responding to COP26

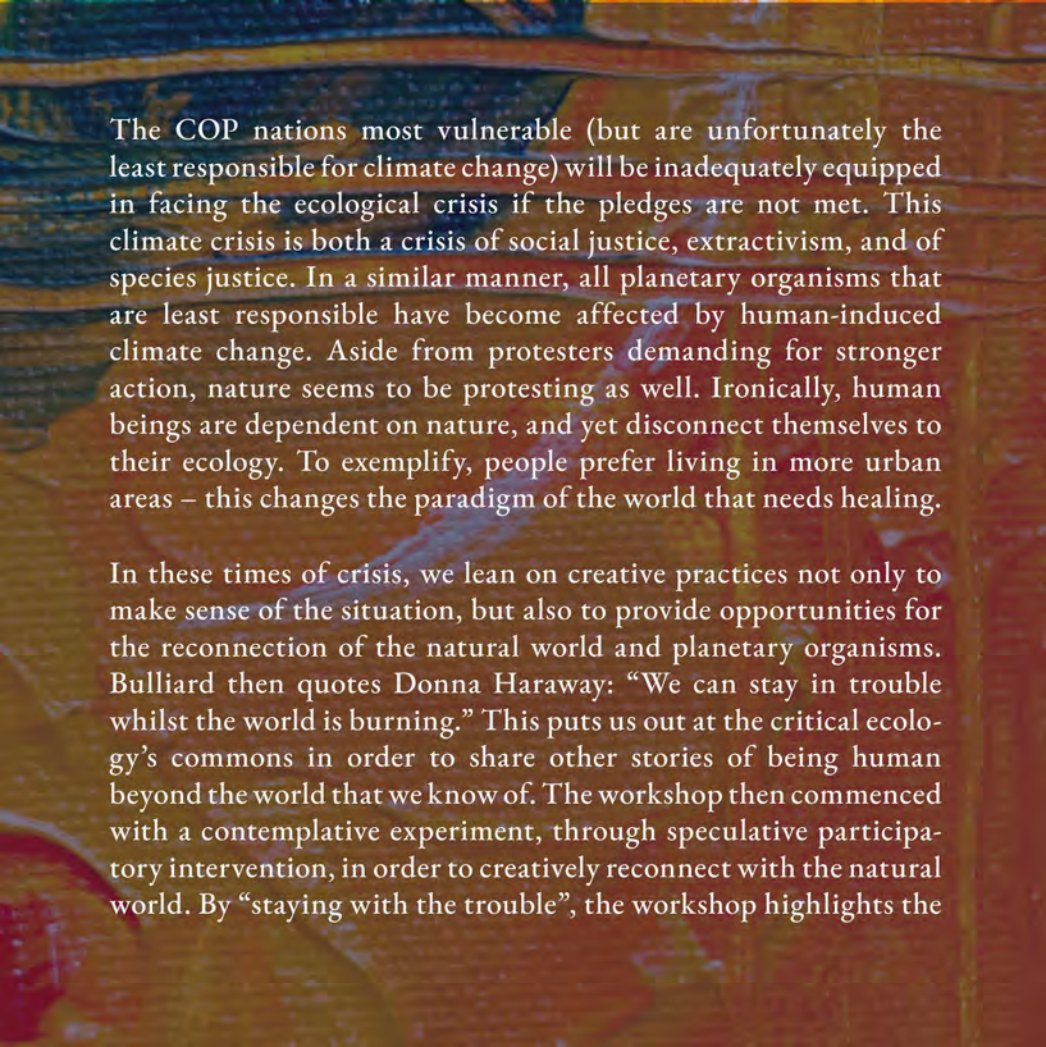
The fifth panel of this symposium was moderated by Heather Barnett and she was joined by her colleagues Naomi Bulliard, and Eva Verhoeven. Collectively, they are members of the critical ecologies group of the shared campus from University of London. The workshop primarily focused on the recent activities at COP26, and their hashtag #togetherforourplanet encourages ecological thinking and acting — exploring the tensions between action and inaction, protecting and protesting.

Bulliard started off by introducing COP26 – the 26th summit of the “Conference of Parties” since 1995 – which was held in Glasgow, Scotland. This is the decision-making body of the UN on climate change established to counteract dangerous human activities on the climate system. At the COP, leaders of signatory states convene, and their negotiations and conversations review the contribution of each party. Moreover, it sets agendas as to how governments should act in response to the largest housing equity crisis. In 1995, parties of the Landmark Paris Agreement of the COP21 committed to hold global temperature rises well below two degrees above pre-industrial levels. This is to substantially reduce the devastating impacts on climate change. In COP26, all 196 parties were asked to submit their updated and more ambitious



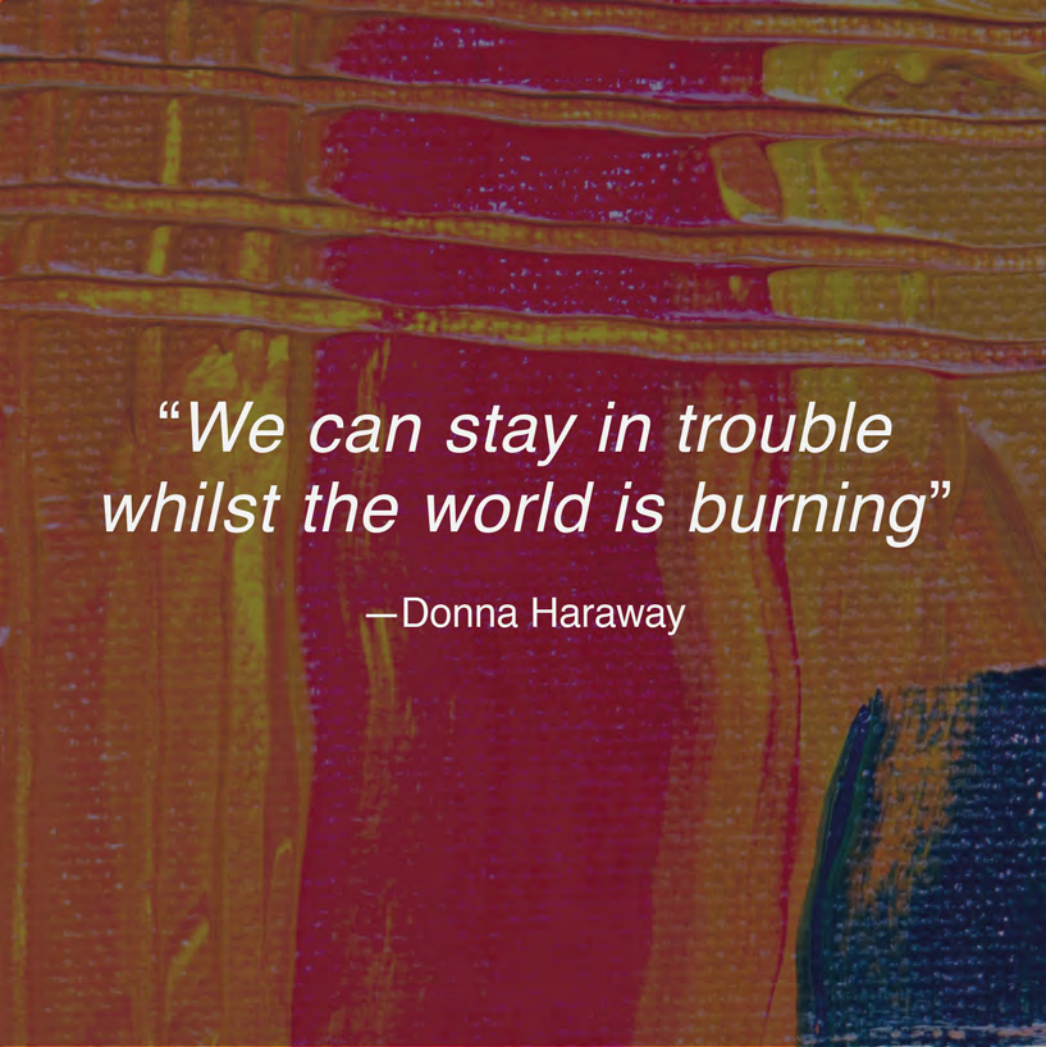
long-term pledges that should meet the three UN goals. The first is to reduce emissions and to maintain the target of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Second is to strengthen adaptation by protecting community and natural habitat. Lastly, to mobilize the finance of USD100 billion per year.

Bulliard noted the actual progress in agreeing to reverse deforestation, and have the US and China agree to reduce missile emissions. COP26 also acknowledged the need to address climate misinformation, to restore and protect nature, as well as keeping the 1.5 degree target alive. Despite the seeming incapability to reach the UN goals, nations have been pledging to phase out coal. Consequently, emissions have continued to rise with reports projecting an increase of 2.5 degrees. All of this occurred despite the pledges of leaders from the 25 prior COP's. To realize the 1.5 degree target, carbon dioxide from coal, gas and oil must drop at least 45% by 2030. For every half a degree rise in the global temperature, a significant number of species become extinct. Thus, it will result in climate injuries, collapse of complex natural systems, biodiversity loss, displacement of human and other species, water stress and species redistribution.

The background of the page is an abstract, textured composition of warm colors. It features a mix of deep reds, oranges, yellows, and browns, with some cooler blue and green tones in the upper left corner. The texture is reminiscent of a watercolor wash or a layered paper effect, with soft, blended edges and some darker, more saturated areas. The overall feel is organic and somewhat somber, reflecting the environmental theme of the text.

The COP nations most vulnerable (but are unfortunately the least responsible for climate change) will be inadequately equipped in facing the ecological crisis if the pledges are not met. This climate crisis is both a crisis of social justice, extractivism, and of species justice. In a similar manner, all planetary organisms that are least responsible have become affected by human-induced climate change. Aside from protesters demanding for stronger action, nature seems to be protesting as well. Ironically, human beings are dependent on nature, and yet disconnect themselves to their ecology. To exemplify, people prefer living in more urban areas – this changes the paradigm of the world that needs healing.


In these times of crisis, we lean on creative practices not only to make sense of the situation, but also to provide opportunities for the reconnection of the natural world and planetary organisms. Bulliard then quotes Donna Haraway: “We can stay in trouble whilst the world is burning.” This puts us out at the critical ecology’s commons in order to share other stories of being human beyond the world that we know of. The workshop then commenced with a contemplative experiment, through speculative participatory intervention, in order to creatively reconnect with the natural world. By “staying with the trouble”, the workshop highlights the



*“We can stay in trouble
whilst the world is burning”*

—Donna Haraway

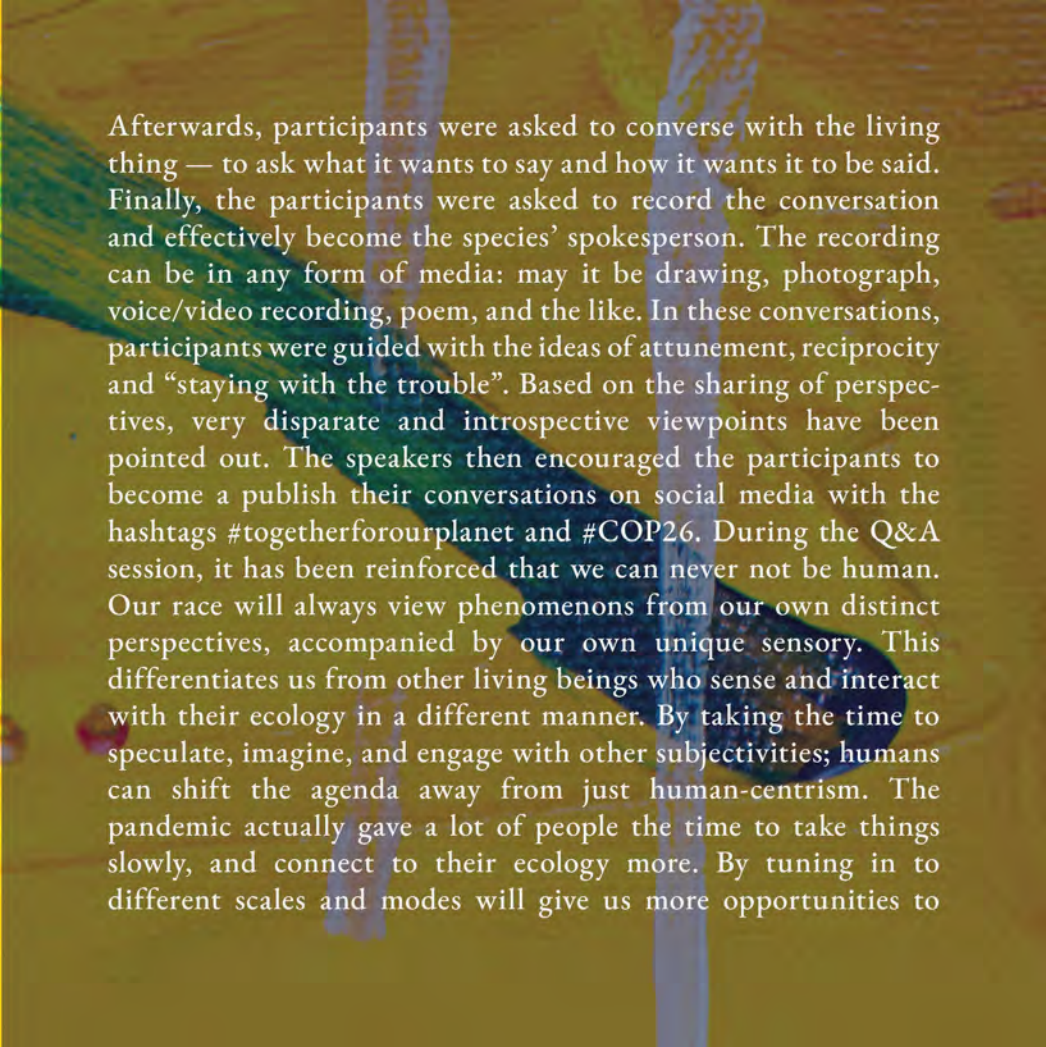




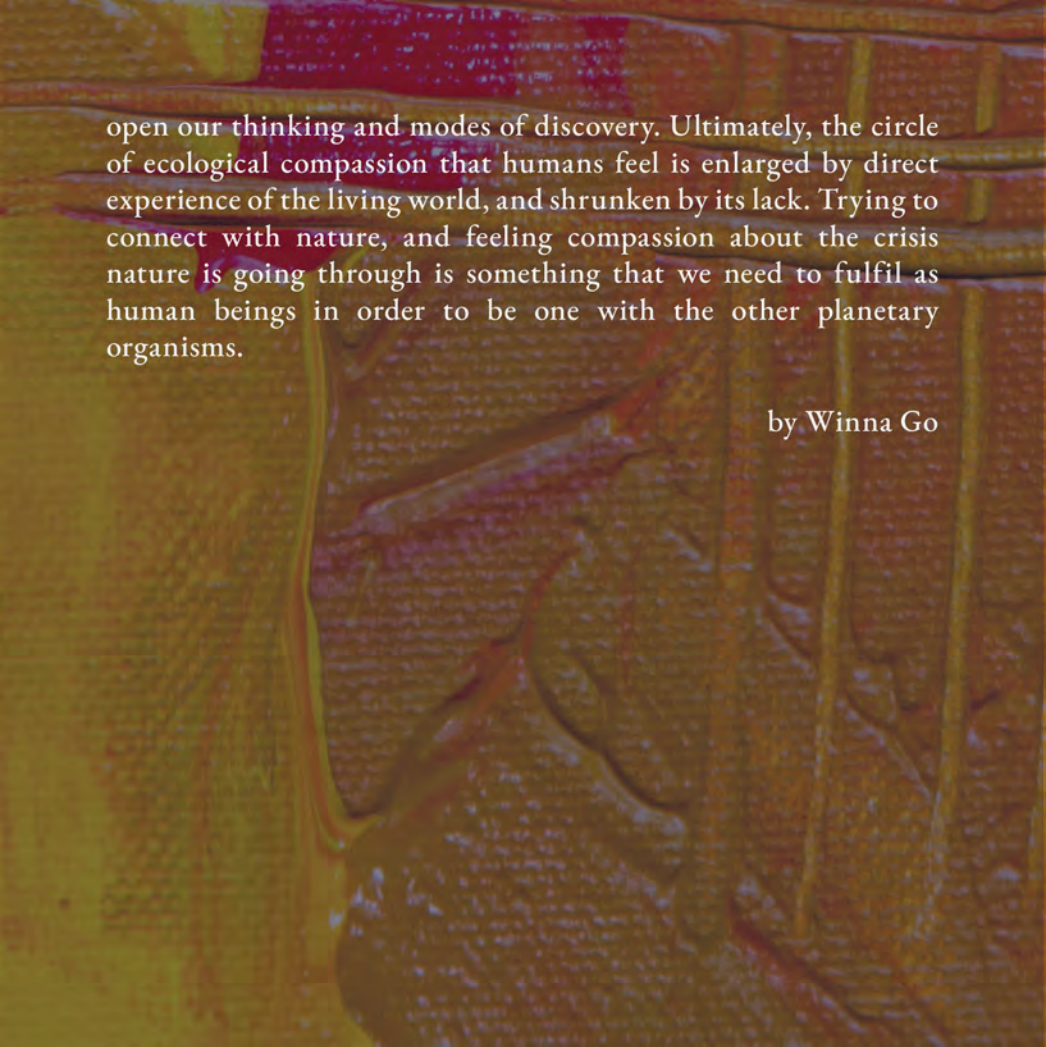
concept of being together for the planet. Accordingly, participants were tasked to think about one or more living beings which are planetary organisms that exist autonomously from humans.

Subsequently, Barnett asked the participants to join a form of “unprotest” — to listen and stand alongside nature’s protest; and attempt to reduce humans’ relentless hegemony on the planet and its resources. This unprotest shifts the paradigm from the battle cry of human beings to that of other species, and what it wants regarding the earth. Basically, the exercise is a non-human protest — shifting the voice to those who were long disregarded. The goal of the exercise is to engage in conversations with multiplicities of life on this planet. This is to shift perspectives from human-centric to planet-centric or multi-species-centric, and to ultimately become the spokesperson for other living beings. Participants were also asked to contemplate on living creatures that exist independently from humans — which could be plants, animals or even a phenomenon that has vitality such as weather or water. Accordingly, they were asked to contemplate and ponder on its existence (even feeling, touching, seeing and smelling it). They were later asked to speculate about its existence, its purpose for existence, its feelings of wanting and needing for its existence.



The background of the page is an abstract painting with broad, expressive brushstrokes. The color palette is dominated by shades of green, blue, and yellow, with some darker, more saturated areas. The strokes are layered and textured, creating a sense of movement and depth. The text is overlaid on this background, centered horizontally.

Afterwards, participants were asked to converse with the living thing — to ask what it wants to say and how it wants it to be said. Finally, the participants were asked to record the conversation and effectively become the species’ spokesperson. The recording can be in any form of media: may it be drawing, photograph, voice/video recording, poem, and the like. In these conversations, participants were guided with the ideas of attunement, reciprocity and “staying with the trouble”. Based on the sharing of perspectives, very disparate and introspective viewpoints have been pointed out. The speakers then encouraged the participants to become a publish their conversations on social media with the hashtags #togetherforourplanet and #COP26. During the Q&A session, it has been reinforced that we can never not be human. Our race will always view phenomenons from our own distinct perspectives, accompanied by our own unique sensory. This differentiates us from other living beings who sense and interact with their ecology in a different manner. By taking the time to speculate, imagine, and engage with other subjectivities; humans can shift the agenda away from just human-centrism. The pandemic actually gave a lot of people the time to take things slowly, and connect to their ecology more. By tuning in to different scales and modes will give us more opportunities to

An abstract background featuring organic, flowing shapes in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The shapes resemble liquid or molten forms, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors are vibrant and layered, with some areas appearing more saturated than others.

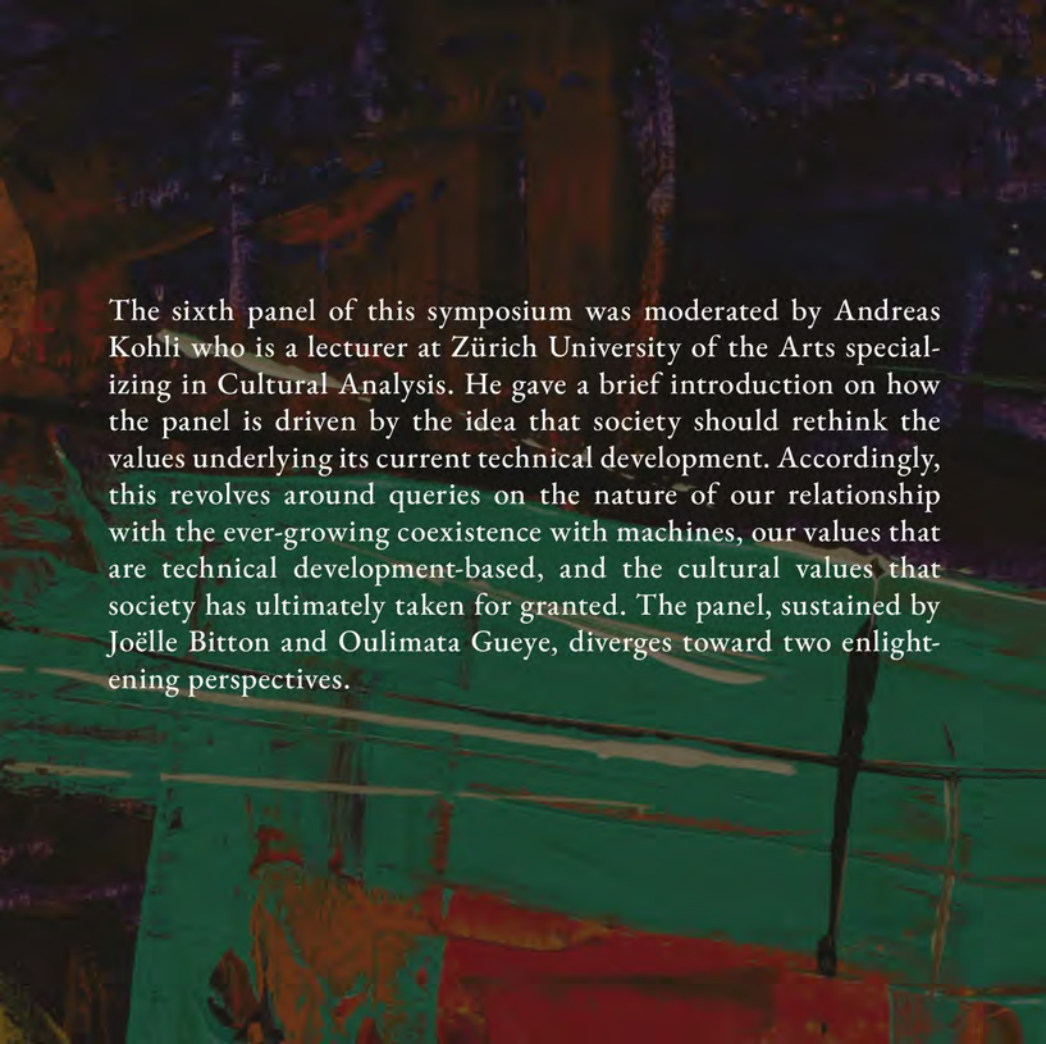
open our thinking and modes of discovery. Ultimately, the circle of ecological compassion that humans feel is enlarged by direct experience of the living world, and shrunk by its lack. Trying to connect with nature, and feeling compassion about the crisis nature is going through is something that we need to fulfil as human beings in order to be one with the other planetary organisms.

by Winna Go





*Cultural Ecology and
Technology*



The sixth panel of this symposium was moderated by Andreas Kohli who is a lecturer at Zürich University of the Arts specializing in Cultural Analysis. He gave a brief introduction on how the panel is driven by the idea that society should rethink the values underlying its current technical development. Accordingly, this revolves around queries on the nature of our relationship with the ever-growing coexistence with machines, our values that are technical development-based, and the cultural values that society has ultimately taken for granted. The panel, sustained by Joëlle Bitton and Oulimata Gueye, diverges toward two enlightening perspectives.

The background is an abstract, textured composition of dark colors. It features broad, expressive brushstrokes in shades of deep blue, indigo, and purple, layered over a base of dark red and maroon. The overall effect is moody and artistic, with some lighter, almost white, streaks that suggest movement or light reflecting off a rough surface.

DO MACHINES HAVE A
SOUL?

The first speaker is Joëlle Bitton who is a lecturer at the Zürich University of the Arts, and an exhibiting multimedia artist. Her work focuses on a sense of intimacy with machines and systems that are generally considered cold or unfriendly. She commenced her talk with the question “Do machines have a soul?” She then introduced the idea that the Critical Ecologies group has a side name called “Ten thousand things”, rooted in the feeling that they are in a constant conversation with ten thousand things or more. Within that conversation, she questioned the place of technology, most especially in the ecological landscape. Accordingly, the ecological landscape comprises a multitude of beings that constitute the entirety of our habitat. She then mentions the etymology of *ecology* which is rooted in the ‘decor of everyday life.’ The main point of this talk revolves around the role of machines in our daily activities and our expectations of them. It also interrogates the societal expectations placed on machines to provide constant solutions to human predicaments.


Bitton then elaborated on the etymology of Anima and Movement — how she perceived things and mythological tales: the motionless and what is in motion, the living and the non-living. According to the mythological aspect of humankind, we are a breath that has

been inserted into clay. It is the myth of Prometheus that brought souls into clay to create life. Hence, animation becomes a vital principle as we shift from inanimate to animate. Bitton further elaborates this by showcasing a clip from *Shall We Dance* starring Fred Astaire (1937). Here, we see how he dances along the rhythm produced by a machine shown at the back of the screen. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a multitude of artists took inspiration from machines, their sound and mechanism, and ultimately considered them as partners. Thus, the machinery became the accompanying partner of Fred Astaire.

Consequently, Bitton mentions the additional elements that come into play such as the movement perceived as action and decision. This emphasizes the notion of uncertainty and ambiguity. Objects have an innate element of surprise to it, as they can behave in an unpredictable and unsystematic manner. Therefore, they have a certain level of autonomy. Bitton then played a clip by Guy Hoffman with a lamp acting as his companion: “*A desk lamp swings its headlight following the position of a person in front of it.*” Accordingly, she introduces how machines are associated with the idea of companionship. To exemplify, the earliest iterations that took place in the 80s is the renowned “AI” Joshua – a computer



“Ten thousand things”



program that carries literal memories of a person. Bitton also discussed *Poetic Strangeness* through the work of Robert Breer in 1970. She emphasizes that some of these machines are in very deep link with our poetic nature. Bitton thinks that Robert Breer introduced the notion of machines which are not necessarily humanoid but are rather abstract and poetic. Therefore, being poetic makes them profoundly humane.

Bitton concludes her talk by elaborating on the *Flux State* where a machine that creates things is more ambiguous than it appears. This is because making items coincides with the idea of creating matter. Moreover, it amplifies the paradigm of fabrication veering away from the customary utilitarian purpose. Thus, Bitton looks at the non-utilitarian and non-commodifying ways of perceiving the inanimate objects around us. This is by going beyond their respective purposes, and regarding them as they naturally are. Ultimately, this is her definition of embodiment. Bitton particularly wants to make things that keep living, that have a life of their own which succumbs to erosion, growth, and decay. This ties the idea that objects have their respective journeys as juxtaposed to ours.



Joëlle Bitton's enlightening talk is carried on by the next speaker Oulimata Gueye, who is a well-respected critic and curator. Her curatorial approach is based on the research intersections of digital and scientific cultures, contemporary art, literature and political ethics. Gueye has a long-standing interest and commitment to the uses of digital technologies in Africa and within its diaspora. Accordingly, she touched upon the exhibition she curated in France which is entitled "UFA: The University of African Futures" (2021). This exhibition emphasized living in an exceptional barrier shaped by technological and ecological issues: acceptance was social justice, the struggles against discrimination, and the notion of historical reconsideration. Thus, art in contact with the imaginary protection of what is happening to society, allows us to explore its blind spots. This sought out different forms of metamorphosis to raise complex questions, and convey individualistic stories. This highlights how artistic meaning can be mobilized as a way of provoking thoughts, nourishing structure and representing debates alongside technology, de-colonial approaches and fundamental issues.

Therefore, UFA: The University of African Futures challenged those involved to come up with their critical viewpoints on the



notion of the future. The queries revolve around the bodies of knowledge and stories necessary to imagine the subsequent. In specifications, the questions that shaped the exhibition include: (1) the place in Africa occupied by speech developments that represent the future, (2) the mobilized imaginaries of Africa, and (3) the remains of a non-aligned future of utopia. As an exploration, the exhibition called for the artists and researchers to traverse back in time to deconstruct clichés surrounding the African relationship to the future, summon the mythology of origin, and reinvent alternative heirs of pan-African panoply. The collective followers of the digital age take hold of issues related to ecology, technology, and struggles for emancipation. On that account, the critical review in progress moves for the detachment of frameworks concerning reflection, to develop a newer and active utopia. Above all, what Africa suffers from is a deficit in its thought production about its future. To allow the continent to think and represent itself; Gueye advocates for the recalibration of Africa away from the frameworks of the West. This is because of the Western mission of Africa toward its prosperity — regardless of the social and cultural repercussions. By producing archaeology of local culture in an African context, its local society will achieve a balance of different orders for its common good and

dignity. Ultimately, finding its strength and voice, free from imperialism, will elevate Africa which then contributes to the overall appraisal of humanity.

by Winna Go





The Life is Wild

The closing keynote of this symposium was moderated by Andrea Urushima, an instructor from Kyoto Seika University. It pertained to Ailton Alves Lacerda Krenak of “*The Life is Wild*” — a Brazilian environmental activist, philosopher, writer, and the Krenak ethnicity’s indigenous movement leader. He represented the indigenous community during the 1988 Brazilian constitution’s elaboration. Moreover, the Federal University of Juiz de Fora conferred him with an honorary doctorate, and the honorific order or the *ordem do mérito* cultural by the Brazilian national government for his contribution to Brazilian culture. They commenced the symposium by presenting a video supported by two collaborators from Brazil: Shundi Iwamizu and Nelson Kao.

Ailton Krenak was born in one of the tiny creeks in the Watú — the Rio Doce. However, both the river and the shore were contaminated by a dam containing mining sludge. Thus, Krenak encouraged its residents to suspend human activity within 10 km from the river, but they displayed dismay as it would result in a financial loss. The river Watú was described as their grandfather — a living entity that would traumatize its community by being delineated with its sludge and transforming it into a foreign organism. It would eventually convalesce, but not during their time. Earth is



Gassho-zukuri styled house, Shirakawa, Prefecture of Gifu, Region of Chubu, Japan.
(Zairon, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

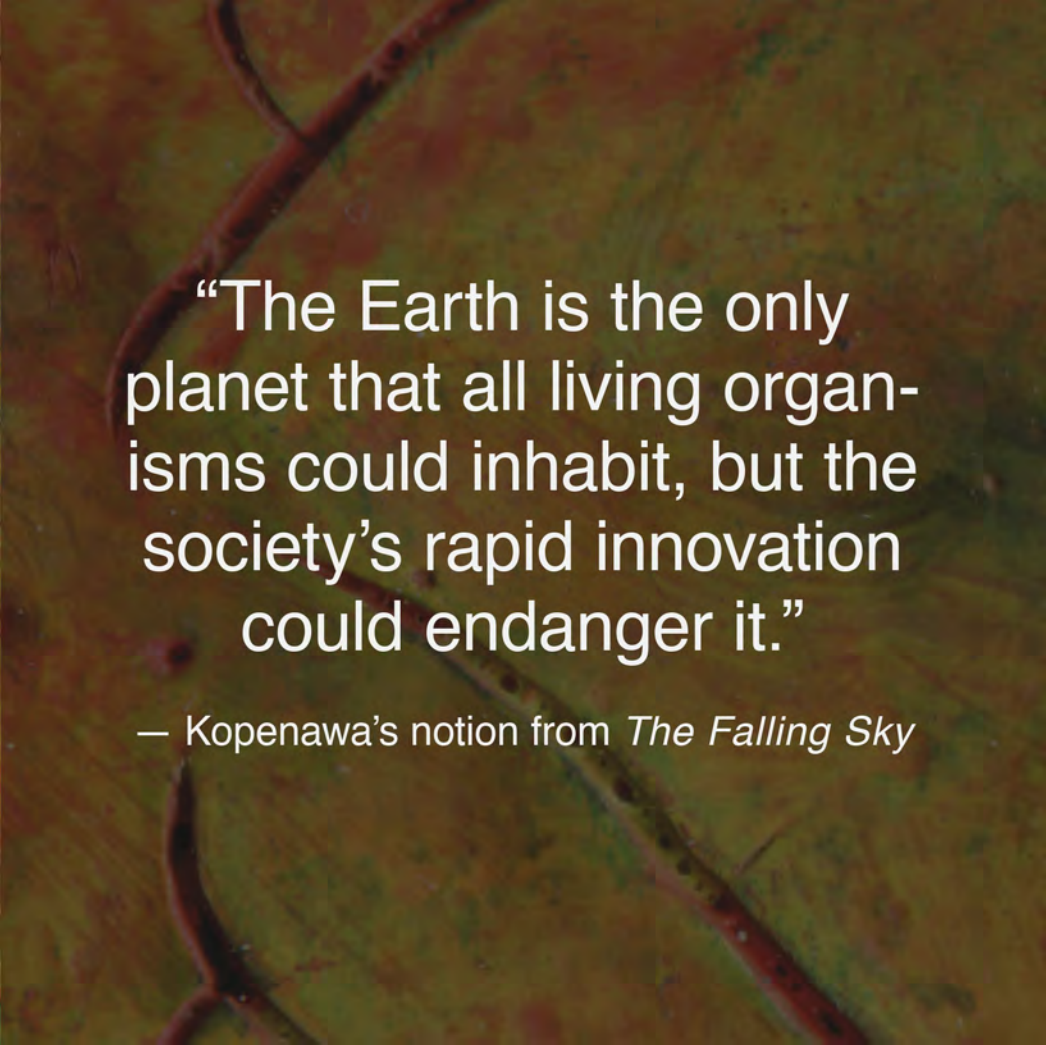
perennial in comparison to humans as their perspective of time differs from it, but its landscape could confront its ruin by an augmentation of human population. Hence, it is preferable to reform society than the human repertoire.

More than 30 years ago, Ailton travelled to Japan and distinguished traditional architecture from skyscrapers. This indicated that its architecture had transfigured, but lost its quality to conform to current trends suited to contemporary lifestyle. They should inhabit alongside the Earth's biosphere without producing a noisy experience that jeopardizes its landscape. This was reinforced by the UN as they proposed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which addressed sustainable advancement for the millennium. Some contended that technology is utilized to ameliorate the Earth through capitalism such as spending two billion dollars to rehabilitate the Rio Doce basin. This became a mentality that justifies their "*pimping*" nature as technology would eventually rectify the river. Also, it became a notion of disruption as it advocated continuous violence towards the land. The social landscapes were instituted by the society, but some were overlooked, effectuating their grotesque appearance. They engendered dystopian landscapes and social inequality.

Their conviction and behaviour depicted how they occupy it. He had inhabited a region wherein it confronted a violent dispute that coerced him and the villagers to evacuate to the Mucuri Valley, the Mexacali village, or Carmésia. This led to the establishment of the indigenous movement as he inserted himself in Brazil's political debate while donning his face with *jenipapo* or black ink.

However, the population devoted their attention to matters other than their current circumstance. They designated themselves to estrange their relationship with nature. As such, certain challenges make it impossible for them to settle in the Earth's ecosystem. The pandemic ravaged its inhabitants despite their resiliency. Ailton discerned a photograph of a remote village in a forest surrounded by a six meters tall barrier composed of straws. The straws had an aroma produced in frigid temperature while providing insulation during scorching weather. Not only did architecture or metamorphosis partake in the type of materials used, but it also referred to an ontology or the perspective beyond the materials. The environment is more transient than buildings unless it was fabricated from bamboo, such as Kyoto's bamboo column.



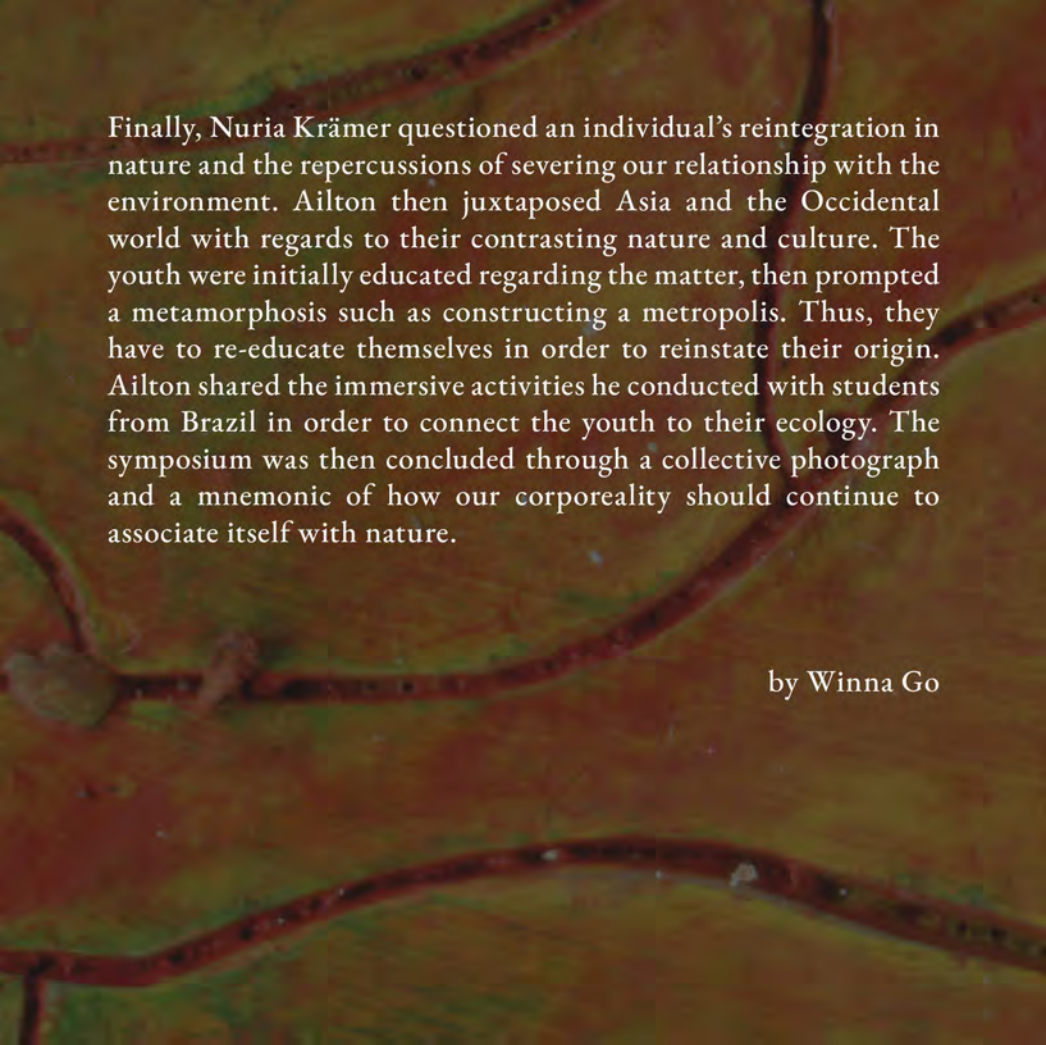


“The Earth is the only planet that all living organisms could inhabit, but the society’s rapid innovation could endanger it.”

— Kopenawa’s notion from *The Falling Sky*

A woman from São Paulo led a project of an urban area's intervention that removes the floor, and uncovers the river to let the water flow. It was a situation constructed by imagery, not unless one resolved to radicalize a dystopia until it became unsustainable. It ensued in a "utopia" or an action of regeneration wherein life was evinced. Largo do Paiçandu was a precedent that stood for 300 years, and constituted by the ambition of multitudinous generations. It was also one of the Paulista Plateau's first urban cores and the production of a long-term investment. Thus, the corporation declined the proposal to minimize financial loss. Furthermore, it is an anthropocene — a dystopia that eventually emerges as debris if they choose to rend it. Ultimately, Ailton composed "*The Wild Life*" in collaboration with architecture, art, education, engineering, and urbanism. He acknowledged that civilization should inaugurate ephemeral modules, rather than durable matter, for it to become a universal concept that succeeds the anthropocene. Also, he inaugurated Kopenawa's notion from *The Falling Sky*: the Earth is the only planet that all living organisms could inhabit, but the society's rapid innovation could endanger it.

Afterwards, the audience were encouraged to ask questions during the open discussion, with Urushima translating the questions and answers simultaneously. Ailton affirmed that the concept of “*Deus Machina*” by Umberto Eco bore an epistemology of how a machine God obtruded itself on several cultures, and how society overcame the trauma inflicted through their presence of mind. Comparably, a cultural trauma was resolved by attending to their corporeal need of reconnecting with Earth. Although, it was a notion that people overlook as they continue to age. In addition, Urushima encouraged the audience to share their observations regarding the video shown. Út Quyên mentioned that back in 2018, she conducted an exhibition from Germany to Vietnam and partook in recycling. Similarly, she conducted research pertaining to the anthropocene and became more aware of the critical ecologies. This ushered her to be more mindful of the environment, and to share her knowledge to the community. In response, Ailton mentioned that he contemplated his lifestyle during the pandemic, and decided to refrain from traveling since it is not a necessity. This viewpoint coincides with his belief on the problematic aspect of society and its dependence on the internet. Overall, our ecology is a depiction of life and an authentic expression of ones’ essence.



Finally, Nuria Krämer questioned an individual's reintegration in nature and the repercussions of severing our relationship with the environment. Ailton then juxtaposed Asia and the Occidental world with regards to their contrasting nature and culture. The youth were initially educated regarding the matter, then prompted a metamorphosis such as constructing a metropolis. Thus, they have to re-educate themselves in order to reinstate their origin. Ailton shared the immersive activities he conducted with students from Brazil in order to connect the youth to their ecology. The symposium was then concluded through a collective photograph and a mnemonic of how our corporeality should continue to associate itself with nature.

by Winna Go



