

CLIMATE COLLABORATIONS

Art, Science, and Future Scenarios

This public symposium interrogates urgent questions for our time: what causes eco-anxiety and fear? What offers hope and enchantment? And what can art do in a climate emergency?

Bringing together artists, activists, scientists, academics and curators, the symposium explores the relations between knowledge, aesthetics and culture in a climate emergency and beyond.

Sponsored by the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne, the Macgeorge Bequest, and the Australian Research Council



Tuesday 27 September 2022, 9.00am-5.00pm
The University of Melbourne
Room 553, Arts West (North Wing)
Registration: <https://bit.ly/future-scenarios>
Enquiries: kyle.harvey@unimelb.edu.au

*Image: Julia Ciccarone, 'Connected?' (2019).
Image courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries,
Melbourne.
Photography: Mark Ashkanasy, Melbourne.*

Program

9.00-9.15	Welcome to the School of Culture & Communication	
9.15-10.30	<p>Session 1: Keynote address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Slow dramaturgy: Ecological themes in contemporary performing arts” Peter Eckersall (City University of New York) • “Towards an Australian Ecological Theatre”: Project introduction and discussion Denise Varney (University of Melbourne), Peta Tait (La Trobe University) and Lara Stevens (University of Melbourne) 	Chair: Jen Parker-Starbuck (Royal Holloway)
10.30-10.50	<i>Morning tea</i>	
11.00-12.20	<p>Session 2: Sciences and climate futures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Possible future climates for the coming years and decades” Andrew King (University of Melbourne) • “Scales of variability in the weather and climate system” Claire Vincent (University of Melbourne) <p>Session 3: Contemporary theatre and climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The play of the weather” Chris Mead (Victorian College of the Arts) 	Chair: Denise Varney (University of Melbourne)
12.20-1:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:00-2:00	<p>Session 3: Future challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The challenges and insights of the embodied process of interdisciplinary climate research” Katie Holmes, Sue Martin, and Jacqueline Millner (La Trobe University) with Deb Anderson (Monash University) 	Chair: Peta Tait (La Trobe University)
2:00-3:00	<p>Session 4: Finding perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Time” Jill Orr (performance artist) • “Just and sustainable futures: how will we do it?” Anitra Nelson (University of Melbourne) • “Art and politics” Gabrielle di Vietri (artist) 	Chair: Peter Eckersall (CUNY)
3.00-3.30	<i>Afternoon tea</i>	

3.30-5.00	<p>Session 4: Art & activism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dharma not drama” Hartmut Veit (artist and researcher) • “Civil resistance and the murder of our planet” Violet CoCo (activist) <i>Note: online presentation</i> • “The power of short form storytelling to communicate the climate crisis” Amanda Anastasi (Monash University) • “Harnessing the creative power of the arts” Deborah Hart (activist & writer) 	<p>Chair: Lara Stevens (University of Melbourne)</p> <p>Discussant: Amy Spiers (RMIT)</p>
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Abstracts & biographies

“Slow dramaturgy: Ecological themes in contemporary performing arts”

Peter Eckersall (City University of New York)

In a time of ecological crisis, how does theatre and performance respond to existential challenges that we face as a planet? Performance has been linked to environmental crises since the 1960s and ecological praxis and ecocriticism are now at the forefront of scholarly work, activism, science, and politics, as well as in the arts. Performance can be both thematically about ecological topics, offering stories highlighting environmental emergencies, for example, and it is also materially made from the reactive, transforming properties that define an ecological system. Following from this, artists now think about and create performances in terms of assemblages, non-human forms and what we are calling slow dramaturgy (Eckersall and Paterson 2011).

This lecture will consider examples of recent performance that deal with ecology and extinction of species in considering key works by three artists – Kris Verdonck (Belgium), Okada Toshiki (Japan) and Eiko Otake (US/Japan). The lecture aims to outline a theory of slow dramaturgy as a way of seeing how contemporary performance is responding to climate catastrophe. As will be argued, in creating affective and differently embodied responses, these performance show how artists are creating important ways of thinking about and responding to climate themes. By exploring the emerging practice of slow dramaturgy, the lecture will try and address how performance is not only about ecological themes but is creating its own ecological systems. Are these artworks, and others like them, foundations for much needed epistemologies in the age of extinction?

Reference cited: Peter Eckersall and Eddie Paterson, ‘Slow Dramaturgy: Renegotiating Politics and Staging the Everyday’, Australasian Drama Studies, No. 58 (Apr 2011): 178-192.

Peter Eckersall is professor of Performance Studies in the PhD Program in Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Centre, City University of New York and is an Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne. Recent publications include, *Okada Toshiki and Japanese Theatre*, (ed. with Barbara Geilhorn, Andreas Regelsberger, Cody Poulton, 2021), *Curating Dramaturgies* (ed. with Bertie Ferdman, 2021), and *Performativity and Event in 1960s Japan* (2013). He is cofounder/dramaturg of Not Yet It’s Difficult. Recent dramaturgy includes, *Sheep #1* (Sachiyo Takahashi, Japan Society) and *Phantom Sun/Northern Drift* (Alexis Destoop, Beursschouwburg, Riga Biennial).

“Towards an Australian Ecological Theatre”: Project introduction and discussion

Denise Varney (University of Melbourne), Peta Tait (La Trobe University), and Lara Stevens (University of Melbourne)

This *Climate Collaborations* symposium marks the halfway point in an investigation into ‘Australian Ecological Theatre’—a 3-year project funded by the Australian Research Council. The collaborative project studies drama, theatre and performances from the 1950s through to the present day for the ways in which they depict nature, environmental challenges, and more recently, the climate emergency. The project investigates what Australian ecological approaches

are represented in the performing arts, including First Nations contemporary performance. Given that theatre has historically been a form that interrogates the great ethical, social and political issues of the day, it asks how contemporary performances engage with the climate crisis and related issues. The project is interested in the theatrical portrayal of a range of emotions such as melancholia, grief, enchantment, fear and hope. In bringing together a program of artists, scientists and scholars we hope to generate dialogue and debate about how the performing arts can contribute to and support the scientific data, the creation of community and platforms for emotional understanding in this time of transformation.

Denise Varney is professor of theatre studies in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. From 2013–2021, she was co-director of the Australian Centre with oversight of its contemporary culture stream of research and engagement. Denise’s research is primarily in modern and contemporary Australian theatre and performance with interests in ecocriticism, politics, modernism, feminism, history and the archive. Her latest monograph is *Patrick White’s Theatre* (2021). Other books include: *Australian Theatre, Modernism and Patrick White: Governing Culture* (with Sandra D’Urso, 2018), *Theatre in the Asia Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* (co-authored 2013), *Radical Visions: The Impact of the Sixties on Australian Drama* (2011) and *The Dolls’ Revolution: Australian Theatre and Cultural Imagination* (with Rachel Fensham, 2005).

Peta Tait is professor emeritus at La Trobe University. Peta is an academic and playwright and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She has written 70 scholarly articles and chapters and recent books include: the authored: *Forms of Emotion: Human to Nonhuman in Drama, Theatre and Performance* (2022); *Theory for Theatre Studies: Emotion* (2021); the co-edited *Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene* (2018); the authored *Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows* (2016); the co-edited *The Routledge Circus Studies Reader*; and the authored *Wild and Dangerous Performances* (2012).

Lara Stevens is a Research Associate in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. She is author of *Anti-War Theatre After Brecht: Dialectical Aesthetics in the Twenty-First Century* (2016), editor and translator (Fre-Eng) of essays by Hélène Cixous in *Politics, Ethics and Performance: Hélène Cixous and the Théâtre du Soleil* (2016), and coeditor with Peta Tait and Denise Varney of *Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene* (2018).

“Possible future climates for the coming years and decades”

Andrew King (University of Melbourne)

Our emissions of greenhouse gases mean that humans have warmed the planet by about 1.2 degrees Celsius to date and we are seeing the consequences of human-caused climate change in many of the extreme weather events people around the world are experiencing. We continue to emit greenhouse gases at near-record levels but there are signs of more serious climate change action on the horizon. In this presentation I’ll discuss the climate changes we’re likely to experience over the next few years and the possible climates for the remainder of the 21st century.

Andrew King is a climate scientist at the University of Melbourne. He completed his undergraduate degree in Meteorology in 2011 and his PhD at UNSW in 2015. Andrew is interested in climate change projections, the links between climate change, climate variability and extreme weather, and seasonal climate prediction.

“Scales of variability in the weather and climate system”

Claire Vincent (University of Melbourne)

In the weather and climate system, nothing happens in isolation. Atmospheric waves and disturbances on a multitude of scales interact with sea surface temperature patterns, complex mountain ranges, coastlines and the land to create our weather and climate extremes. The current and future weather and climate manifest as the footprint of these interactions. I will present evidence of some multi-scale interactions in the weather and climate system that make climate projections both fascinating and challenging

Claire Vincent is a senior lecturer in atmospheric science in the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Melbourne. She completed her PhD at the Technical University of Denmark in 2011. Claire has research interests in tropical weather and climate variability and wind power meteorology.

“The play of the weather”

Chris Mead (Victorian College of the Arts)

Is mainstage theatre lagging behind other art forms in its engagement with, immersion in and dramatisation of our current climate emergency? Is there a template for a theatre of cruelty, rage and radical hope? Where do science and theatre meet? Can we speak of greenhouse gases in iambs? Does climate change resist the five act structure? An overview of some recent Australian plays.

Chris Mead is the Head of Drama at the Victorian College of the Arts, based in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at The University of Melbourne. Previous positions have included Literary Director at the Melbourne Theatre Company, inaugural Artistic Director at Playwriting Australia, and Literary Manager of the Sydney Theatre Company and Belvoir St Theatre.

“The challenges and insights of the embodied process of interdisciplinary climate research”

Katie Holmes, Sue Martin, and Jacqueline Millner (La Trobe University) with Deb Anderson (Monash University)

In this presentation, we, as researchers on the interdisciplinary ARC-funded project *Parched: Cultures of Drought in Regional Victoria* (2021-2023) and an industry-funded project *Covering Weather Extremes: The Challenges for Journalists* (2019-22), discuss how some of the challenges of interdisciplinary research offer insight into the broader need to change how we work together if we are to address climate justice. Representing the fields of history, environmental humanities, literary studies, creative arts/art theory and journalism, we consider how we attempt to understand and adapt our own methods and research frameworks by engaging with those of our colleagues'. We acknowledge how our own affective experiences have influenced our research paths, our areas of focus as well as our methods, and how these can be brought to bear to contribute to climate justice. And we reflect on how our own embodied vulnerabilities, and our encounters with the specific experiences of regional communities and individuals, provide a rich context for considering climate crisis and the challenges of climate action.

Katie Holmes is Professor of History and co-director of the Centre for the Study of the Inland at La Trobe University. She lives on unceded Wurundjeri country. Her work integrates environmental, gender, oral and cultural history and she has a particular interest in the interplay between an individual, their culture and environment. Her books include *Spaces in Her Day: Women's diaries of the 1920s-1930s* (1995), *Between the Leaves: Stories of women, writing and gardens* (2011), and the co-authored *Mallee Country: land, people, history* (2020). Katie is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science Australia, and, with Prof Brenda Croft, the Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Visiting Chair in Australian Studies, Harvard, 2023-24.

Susan K. Martin is Professor Emerita in English and a former Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at La Trobe University. Her current research is on the teaching of Australian literature, and Australian cultural production and the representation of drought. Susan is a former President of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL). Her books include *Women and Empire (Australia)* (2009), and *Colonial Dickens* (with Kylie Mirmohamadi, 2012).

Jacqueline Millner is Associate Professor of Visual Arts at La Trobe University. She has published widely on contemporary Australian and international art in key anthologies, journals and catalogues of national and international galleries and museums. Her books include *Conceptual Beauty: Perspectives on Australian Contemporary Art* (2010), *Australian Artists in the Contemporary Museum* (with Jennifer Barrett, 2014), *Fashionable Art* (with Adam Geczy, 2015), *Feminist Perspectives on Art: Contemporary Outtakes* (co-edited with Catriona Moore, 2018), *Contemporary Art and Feminism* (with Catriona Moore, 2022) and *Care Ethics and Art* (co-edited with Gretchen Coombs, 2022). She has curated major multi-venue exhibitions and received prestigious research grants from the Australian Research Council, Australia Council, and Arts NSW.

Deb Anderson is an academic and journalist based in Melbourne. Born in north Queensland, she worked as a journalist in Australia and abroad, mostly for *The Age*, before joining Monash as a lecturer. Her research focuses on the experience of extreme weather, and issues of gender, climate action and news culture. She is examining the challenges of disaster reporting in the context of climate change, supported by the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia, and completing a State Library of Queensland fellowship that is recording women's oral histories on protection the Great Barrier Reef.

“Time”

Jill Orr (performance artist)

Depending on the lens through which one experiences time, its impact is subtle, molecular, geological and cosmic. It is witnessed in our back yard, impacting our bodies, human and non-human alike, within the Garden of Eden whose paradise is firmly fictitious. I will touch on the idea of hope, the stand in and listening as productive and non-productive entry points into the multi-faceted discussion of future scenarios through Climate Collaborations. To sit still in a natural environment is a way if we have sunscreen, hats and long shirts or a tinny ready to float on the torrential waters or a fire proof dugout, good for humans but what about the rest?

Jill Orr is a performance artist crossing between performances for live audiences and performances for the camera. She has produced iconic images reflecting an Australian perspective. Jill was represented in the inaugural Venice International Performance Art Week in

2012. She was awarded an Australia Council Fellowship to produce *Antipodean Epic* from 2015-7. Recent works include *Detritus Springs*, *Listen*, *Laundry* and *Dark Night* that have each been commissioned for 2018 and 2019 exhibitions. In 2020-2021, Jill was represented in *Australia: Antipodean Stories* at Padiglione d'Art Contemporanea, Milan, curated by Eugenio Viola. Most recently, her work *This Tree* was commissioned for Monash University Museum of Art's, *Tree Story* (2021-22). Jill was represented in *Know My Name: Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now* (2021-22) at the National Gallery of Australia.

“Just and sustainable futures: how will we do it?”

Anitra Nelson (University of Melbourne)

Humans face two pressing challenges, ecological unsustainability and social inequities, even if most focus is on containing climate emissions and global heating. Social scientists, scientists and activists appreciate that broadscale, rapid and radical changes are necessary, requiring public discussion and decision-making on a collective future. To contribute to such debates, I have produced a short 8-minute film *Beyond Money: Yenomon* based on my recent book *Beyond Money: A Postcapitalist Strategy* (2022), which proposes a future built on social and environmental (rather than monetary) values.

Anitra Nelson is an activist-scholar whose recent academic and creative work focuses on degrowth, non-monetary economies and sustainable futures. She is Honorary Principal Fellow with the Informal Urbanism Research Hub (InfUr-) at The University of Melbourne.

“Art and politics”

Gabrielle di Vietri (artist)

As artists in these urgent times how do we make and measure impact? How do we best challenge the status quo, and contribute to a climate-safe and equal future? This presentation tracks the evolution of Gabrielle's practice from exhibiting artist to politician.

Gabrielle de Vietri is a socially-engaged artist, a community activist, the former Mayor of Yarra and a candidate in the upcoming state election.

“Dharma not drama”

Hartmut Veit (artist and researcher)

Drama (and its genres, comedy, satire and tragedy) are by their very nature deeply anthropocentric, positioning human beings at the centre of all relationships. Dharma – a key concept in religions such as Buddhism – can be understood as a set of beliefs in a universal truth common to all beings at all times and as such empathises the interdependent relations of all beings, seen or unseen. Within the context of the current climate emergency, war and energy crisis these two concepts are explored through the presentation of Hartmut Veit's recent eco-art performance *Suspended States* at Stanley Ave Studio. Addressing the impacts of climate and ecological grief on individual and collective mental well-being, the intention of Veit's current project Stanley Ave Studio is to integrate the imagination and creative arts into contemporary Dharma practice as an authentic path to deeply inquire into the nature of the mind and lived

experience. The intention is to re-connect and transform our relationship with self, other and the living world.

Hartmut Veit is an artist, researcher and performer. Questioning our human relationships with geological matter has been central to Veit's socially-engaged art practice. Over many years of social engagement and research his artworks and eco-performances with coal in Victoria's Latrobe Valley created conversations with residents whose lives and livelihoods were intertwined with climate change and demonstrated the increasing ecological impact of human beings' commodified relationships to nature, place and matter.

“Civil resistance and the murder of our planet”

Violet CoCo (activist)

Throughout history, in times of great injustice, non-violent civil resistance (protest) has been at the forefront of community change. When reckoning with the greatest injustice the world has ever faced – the murder of our planet's life support systems – what is the appropriate response? Beyond what is appropriate, what is effective? Protest is about telling a story, and art becomes the armour of the peaceful. As we see from flowers in guns of the anti-war movement, to Violet CoCo's burning pram.

Violet CoCo describes herself as a conscientious objector to the murder of our planet. She has been a part of organising major disruptive festivals with Extinction Rebellion, supported First Nations in decolonisation, while also advocating for justice for women, refugees, and queer communities. She is facing two years in prison, for blocking the Harbour Bridge in a climate protest, under the new anti-protest laws in NSW.

“The power of short form storytelling to communicate the climate crisis”

Amanda Anastasi (Monash University)

Communicating the climate crisis has been fraught with issues and challenges, and creative approaches are needed to close the gap between the concept of climate change and the everyday human experience. Amanda Anastasi, Poet in Residence at the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub (MCCCRH), has found that short and striking poetry combined with visual images can elicit emotion and convey climate change as an urgent, human-centred issue. By translating climate science into multimedia one-line storytelling involving real situations from the climate frontlines, future and current climate change impacts can be shared in an accessible way to expand climate change compassion and awareness and ultimately inspire action.

Amanda Anastasi is a Melbourne poet who writes primarily about the effects and impacts of climate change. She is the current Poet in Residence at the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub (MCCCRH) and was an Artist in Residence for Assembly of the Future's *The Things We Did Next* (2020). Amanda was also a recipient of a Wheeler Centre Hot Desk Fellowship to work on a series of poems set in the year 2042. Amanda's poetry has been featured in *Best Australian Science Writing* 2021 and 2022, as well as *The Griffith Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Right Now* and *The Massachusetts Review*. She is a two-time winner of the Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize and is the author of *The Inheritors* (2021). She holds a Bachelor of

Professional Writing & Editing and Literature from Deakin University and is the curator of La Mama Poetica.

“Harnessing the creative power of the arts”

Deborah Hart (activist & writer)

Given that the Climate Emergency is a reflection of a deep cultural crisis, my interdisciplinary practice has long asked: what role can art play in effectively shifting culture? How can creative interventions hold powerful polluters and their enablers (politicians, financiers, media) responsible for the climate crisis to account while effectively mobilising communities to demand urgent, best available science based action? My extensive experience working at the intersection of art, science and civil society has convinced me that collaborative and determined creative climate action is the most effective way of imagining and designing plans for cleaner, fairer and sustainable futures. And it is the greatest antidote to despair.

Deborah Hart is an arts and culture focussed environment and social justice activist and writer based in Narrm (Melbourne). She is the author of *[Guarding Eden: Champions of Climate Action](#)* (2015), Chair of [CLIMARTE](#) (est. 2010), co-founder and director of [ClimActs](#) (producers of Climate Guardians, est. 2013), and founder and director of [LIVE](#) (est. 2006), one of Australia’s first local climate groups. Before becoming a full-time activist, Deborah spent 16 years working in development roles with leading Australian arts and culture organisations as funding pressures were forcing them to form alliances with extractive and exploitative industries.

Information

Directions

The symposium will take place in Room 553 on level 5 of the Arts West building (North Wing) at the Parkville campus of the University of Melbourne. Please find a map here:

<https://maps.unimelb.edu.au/parkville/building/148a>

The closest trams are the 19 (alight at stop #11, the University of Melbourne/Royal Parade), or the 1, 3, 5, 6, 16, 64, 67, or 72 (alight at stop #1, the University of Melbourne/Swanston St).

Catering

This event is fully catered and completely vegetarian. There will be a range of gluten-free and vegan options available as well. Please contact kyle.harvey@unimelb.edu.au if you have additional requirements.

Covid-19

Please note: This is a mask-friendly event. As it is held indoors, the University of Melbourne's current advice strongly recommends mask use in indoor settings. Please do not come to campus if you have any COVID-19 symptoms.

If you develop symptoms in the days following the event, please get tested for COVID-19 and notify kyle.harvey@unimelb.edu.au if you test positive.

Further information is available at the University's COVID-Safe guidelines here:

<https://www.unimelb.edu.au/coronavirus>

Related event

Symposium attendees may be interested in a public lecture to be delivered by Professor Jen-Parker-Starbuck (Royal Holloway, University of London). The lecture, titled *The Sea is on Fire: Machinic Crustaceans and Ecological Promises* will take place on Thursday 29 September 2022, 6.00pm-7.30pm, at the Forum Theatre, Arts West (North Wing) at The University of Melbourne. For more information, and to register to attend or to view a recording after the event, please see <https://bit.ly/parkerstarbuck>.

Contacts

For any queries, please contact Dr Kyle Harvey at kyle.harvey@unimelb.edu.au.