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Taipei Biennial 2020

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ARTS OF COMING DOWN TO EARTH

Cultural institutions and ecological emergency:
how to land on terrestrial futures?



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Foreword

Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro

Catalyzing and mirroring multiple futures, Covid-19 has upended the “business-as-usual” of cultural networks in an unprecedented way.

Some national culture agencies have set up emergency funding, while museums and festivals have moved their programs online. But there have also been voices to call for a pause in the race for audience figures, mega-exhibitions, hypermobility.

Like requests for conditional bailouts and calls to “not go back to normal” by other productive sectors, can we – artists, museum and gallery leaders, curators, teachers, researchers – find common ground to inspire our institutions to keep the engine on slow? What alliances can be nurtured between cultural institutions, social movements and audiences? How can cultural institutions inspire other productive industries and societies facing climate and ecological emergency to rapid, radical systemic change?

Coming Down to Earth implies rethinking all means of production. Beyond institutional discourse on ecology, what empirical procedures may transform visual arts and cultures into vessels of a fossil-free, permacircular, non-specist future?

This reader brings together active voices in the field, speaking from various contexts and with diverse perspectives on these issues. Instead of adding up to the vast archive of Anthropocene research, it seeks to engage with the “blind spot” of environmentally conscious cultural institutions. The questions at stake deal with the overlooked ecological footprint of exhibition-making and art production.

The reader opens with critical materials that invite us to take action, by curators and researchers Nikita Yingqian Cai and Marcos Baravalle, writing from Guangzhou and Venice respectively. *Reduce Art Flights*, a work by Gustav Metzger (documented by Max Andrews / *Latitudes*), introduces reflections on decelerating mobility.

The second half focuses on addressing environmental externalities in the visual art “industry at a practical level” , with methodological contributions by Julie’s Bicycle, a non-profit organization that for more than 10 years has advocated greening creative industries and supported art institutions in transitioning sustainability.

By way of conclusion, we reproduce the original declaration of “climate and ecological emergency” signed by a growing number of arts organizations and individuals as part of the international Culture Declares grassroots movement.

We talked long enough about politics in art. Time for action and art-as-politics.

What happens after the contactless art world?

Nikita Yingqian Cai

April 2020

Published online on WHAT COULD/SHOULD CURATING DO? (wscsd.com)

When Covid-19 crosses physical borders with exponential scale and speed, its secondary catastrophes also provoke doomsday imagination from every sector of society. One ironic image about the art world circulating on social media is a meme of two screen shots from Titanic, in which the sinking boat symbolizes “The world in 2020”, while the quartet playing on the deck stands for the “Art institutions and galleries generating online content”. The metaphor is blunt and alarming: our security net and social identification won’t stand alone in the bleak economic prospect of the sinking world, so are we producing content just for the sense of belonging? Will we end up being the only audience of this content?

After Art Basel launched the online viewing room on March 20 as compensation for its cancelling of the fair in Hong Kong, commercial galleries fell over one another to explore the contactless art market as a therapy for the pandemic shock. It will probably take another crisis for economists to analyze data, compare behavioral patterns, and make predictions of the online sales profitability, but institutions that are less profit-oriented are by no means immune to the competition of attention that has been created by global social distancing. Alongside the outburst of open resource archives and publications, online screenings and showrooms, podcasts, live streaming and Zoom conferences quickly take over as platforms for art events. M Woods, a private art museum in Beijing, set up a virtual gallery inside the Nintendo game Animal Crossing to add value to its image as internet influencer. The game allows people to pay mortgages, build homes with furniture and objects, and socialize with animal neighbors according to their own image and imagination, but all the resources for this dreamlike island have to be extracted from somewhere offshore. The image of a cute little girl meditating on a bench surrounded by the wallpaper of Andy Warhol’s Cow (1966) is a perfect metaphor for escapism. Such 4.0 version of Cao Fei’s RMB City (2007-2011) is nonetheless novel but its simulation of the neo-liberal lifestyle is hard to ignore. Since the outbreak in Wuhan in January, new forms of social networks and collaborations have emerged and concrete solidarity is being formed across different social sectors in China, yet our contemporary art world is busy promoting the commodified experience of art.

Two days ago, I stumbled upon an online vernissage on e-flux, presented by the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design and titled *Weird Sensation Feels Good. An Exhibition About ASMR* (“Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response”). According to the statement, “ASMR injects the Internet with softness, kindness and empathy. As a form of digital intimacy, it offers comfort on demand, standing against the feeling of isolation that constant connectivity can deceptively breed. Anecdotally, ASMR is being used as a form of self-medication against the effects of loneliness, insomnia, stress, and anxiety. This is a cue to its success, and to its transcendental appeal”⁰¹. Conversely, the offline world is injected with hardness and struggles, self-medication is not going to protect people from getting sick or losing jobs. Less than a month after the containment policy went into effect in New York, the Museum of Modern Art terminated contracts with all its freelance educators in early April. MoMA represents one example of the museum industry among many other service industries that have sacked its part-time staff or furloughed its full-time employees quickly after the pandemic hit hard. Compared with small businesses such as restaurants, most museums’ operational budgets had been approved in 2019, and big institutions like MoMA would have planned out its fiscal structure, including the percentage of public funding, private patronage and ticket revenue for at least three years into the future. Before the closing of borders and museums, blockbuster exhibitions sat at the core of the art world’s show business, balancing the interests of trustees and the scale of production and demand. MoMA is one of the wealthiest museums in the world, so how come a cultural entity that embraces speculative narratives and future imaginations gives up so quickly in response to temporary uncertainties? Are we losing faith in reclaiming our audience after the pandemic?

Manuel Borja-Villel, director of the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, stated in an open letter that some of their staff have been sick but all of them will be able to keep their jobs “thanks in part to Spain’s governmental assistance program”. He also addressed the necessity of a paradigm shift, “Eventually, museums will reopen, but will people be afraid of being close to one another? Will we be able to continue developing large exhibitions that are anti-ecological? Maybe blockbuster exhibitions are over. Maybe we should think more about process and research.”⁰² Recalling a postwar Marshall plan or a re-emphasis on process and research is certainly not a paradigm shift. We have to go deeper to ask: What kind of paradigm are we talking about? Has the pandemic revealed the problematics

of the diffusionist museum model driven by Euro-American centralism and modernism?

The Museum of Modern Art as a canon of large-scale institution was born in the U.S. context and charged with historical contingency. When Alfred Barr organized *Cubism and Abstract Art* at 11 West 53rd Street in New York, he had no idea that the diagram he presented and the symbolic construct of abstract art would lay ground for a global chronology of modernism which shaped artists’ learning experiences and their occupational aspirations, historical arguments and museology outside of the Western centers in the postwar years. The evolutionary periodization and the colonial terms of “Near-Eastern Art” and “Negro Sculpture” have been challenged and eventually abandoned, but the network of the main characters remains (artists, art historians, curators, museum directors and trustees etc.) and it maps out a division of labor, identity and resource which still functions in our contemporary art world. What is invisible in Barr’s modern art supply chain is the end of demand, which we call “audience” nowadays. The American economy had not recovered from the Great Depression when Barr’s exhibition opened in 1936, and it took a sharp downturn in mid-1937 which lasted for another 18 months. It is hard to imagine *Cubism and Abstract Art* was orchestrated for ordinary Americans who were still suffering from unemployment at that time, and yet the exhibition gained substantial support from MoMA’s trustees to secure the artworks through U.S. Customs and from other private foundations. Barr’s essay in the catalog highlighted the “impulse of abstraction” and its dialectic; “it is based upon the assumption that a work of art, a painting for example, is worth looking at primarily because it presents a composition or organization of color, line, light and shape.”⁰³ Such zeitgeist needs to be accommodated in the idealized, climate-controlled white cube, which becomes the most important paradigmatic residual of MoMA. Even in a time of crisis, museums can still shut the discorded tones of the economical-disadvantaged and messiness of reality outside, and provide sanctuary for autonomous art objects and meditation.

There has been a lot of comparison between the stock market crashes in February and March this year and the Wall Street collapse in 1929 that triggered the decade-long Great Depression. But the postwar trauma has given European countries more reasons to activate their social democratic policies such as the German federal government’s sweeping aid package of €50 billion for the

country's creative and cultural sectors. The Chinese media and artist community voluntarily picked up the positive messages rather than the depressing ones in such a difficult time. Artist friends who live in Germany posted messages on wechat about their application for the subsidies, and some of them had already received the money. I'm genuinely happy that art sector and artist's social values can be recognized and sustained in the European context, but a conversation between myself and Qiao, our curatorial assistant unpacked my doubts. Qiao shares an apartment with a couple of friends who are educated young professionals. They have been intrigued by Qiao's enthusiasm and have visited some of Times Museum's exhibitions. Qiao said that her friends couldn't understand why the arts need to be subsidized, and why a government like Germany is giving artists money. I tried to structure my thoughts and present my arguments around the emergence of the bourgeoisie museum after the French Revolution, Tony Bennett's "exhibitionary complex" informed by Foucault, the modernist ideology of "art for art's sake" and the more recent socioeconomic concept of "precarariat" proposed by Guy Standing... I soon realized that none of Qiao's roommates would be satisfied with my explanation. Artists are precariats because "they live with the expectation and desire to move around, without an impulse for long-term, full-time employment in a single enterprise."⁴⁴ They are cultural migrant workers competing in the global market, but the globalization that used to support their production has been put on hold. European countries with colonial history have been exporting their culture and artists for centuries and they know this business better than anyone else.

Xiang Biao, a social anthropologist who has won awards for his survey on cross-bordered labor migration from Northeast China, argued for a different interpretation of "precarariat", "one very important background note about the precariat in the West is that they are the product of a large-scale reduction of the welfare state, as well as excessive marketization and liberalization. The loss of workers' benefits has left these people feeling like they are in a precarious spot. So the Western precariat has developed movements such as Occupy Wall Street, and they have become an active political force. For China's society people, their material life is better than before, and many are quite grateful to their country. From this point of view, they're not like the precariat. That's why when you talk to them about movements like Occupy, they don't

understand where all this anger is coming from." Xiang emphasized the role of intermediaries which create demand and control the flow of migration, and went even further to claim that these laborers' "contributions to China will increasingly be reflected in their role as consumers. In the future, the way in which they relate to society will not be mainly as laborers, but as consumers."⁴⁵

After the Beijing Olympic Game in 2008, galleries, museums and art media in China have all contributed to creating a demand for contemporary art narrowly defined by market value. The inauguration of the West Bund Art & Design Fair in 2014 and the neo-liberal developmental policies of the Shanghai government also paved the way for unprecedented growth of blockbuster exhibitions which feature artists as celebrity producers of commodified visual experiences. The paradigm of MoMA and the ideology of modernism were stripped of their historical context and repackaged as a glossy new dream of immersive consumption. Museums, biennials and art fairs witnessed queues of young audiences even though the price of one entrance ticket has soared up to 150-250RMB. There is also a popular myth among potential museum founders that franchising museums and reproducing blockbusters are going to bring in substantial revenues. We are creating the bubble of contemporary art like Luckin Coffee selling its speculative financial statements to investors. China's economic miracle in the past four decades has relied on demographic dividends boosted by the increasing share of the working-age population and more women entering the labor force. One does not need statistics to confirm such insight because museum audiences in China are mostly young and mostly girls.

During the period of containment, people got used to contactless everything. Contactless payment has prevailed over cash for some time, contactless delivery prevents people from rushing to supermarkets and hoarding, contactless education keeps kids and parents occupied at home... It is not Confucianism or totalitarianism that have stopped Chinese people from going around, it is our easy adaption to contactless socializing. The modernist impulse of abstraction demonstrated by Alfred Barr in Cubism and Abstract Art has been transformed into a powerful, digitized abstraction of capitalism and consumerism. The question is whether the digital intermediary will lead our audience back to the museum after we all recover from the pandemic, or it will completely replace the temporal-spatial intimacy of relating to an artwork in a museum?

One thing we have learnt from the ongoing crisis is the vulnerability of our existing structure of globalization. Individual stories, precarious voices and empirical knowledge can be filtered by ideological constructs and power relations. We are all in this and there is no exclusive position we can take as cultural makers. Identifying ourselves as precariats might smash the forming hierarchy of different social groups, and we have to recognize that labor division between artists (art professionals) and other professions, producers and consumers does not hold a historical legitimacy outside of the Euro-American context. The paradigm of museums and exhibition-making might not be able to accommodate the diverse experiences and document the socioeconomic transformations in the post-corona world. Replicating the model of the modern art museum, reproducing large exhibitions that are anti-ecological, or homogenizing user-consumer experiences of art will not introduce any shift. We have to walk on the ground, resist our impulse of abstraction, indigenize the process of art making and become our own intermediaries to configurate new contacts between people.

01 ArkDes presents a virtual vernissage, *WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD* | An exhibition about ASMR, April 7, 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/video/325072/arkdes-nbsp-presents-a-virtual-vernissage-weird-sensation-feels-good/> (accessed on April 11, 2020)[1] [Manuel Borja-Villel](#),

02 Letter From Madrid: The Director of the Reina Sofia on What It Will Take for Museums to Rise Again—and What They Can Do in the Meantime, April 6, 2020, <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/madrid-reina-sofia-director-1824210>

03 Cubism and Abstract Art, p. 13, April 1936, *The Museum of Modern Art New York*

04 Guy Standing, *Defining the Precariat, A Class in the Making*. April 19, 2013, <https://www.eurozine.com/defining-the-precariat/>

05 Cai Yiwen, Q&A with Anthropologist Xiang Biao on Northeast China's Overseas Migrants, March 19, 2020 <http://www.sixthtone.com/news/1005348/q%26a-with-anthropologist-xiang-biao-on-northeast-chinas-overseas-migrants>

On The Biennale's Ruins? Inhabiting The Void, Covering The Distance

Marco Baravalle

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Translation by Gabriella Riccio

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Too much love and friendship connect me to many people working for and around Venice Biennale. Too much admiration connects me to many that thanks to La Biennale made Venice a place to come back to instead of a “once-in-a-lifetime” tourist destination. Not light-heartedly these pages will go down as an exercise of speculation and critique. I am participating in the uncertainty of those people risking to lose their jobs, watching their business fail, not getting their contracts renewed, being unable to access the already miserable existing welfare measures. Considering the earnings in monetary terms: room attendants, janitors, technicians, workers, freelancers, researchers, teachers, journalists, tourist-guides, artists, architects, curators, performers, etc. will – more or less – lose something due to a possible (yet hopefully unlikely) cancellation or postponed events programmes linked to the various departments of La Biennale.

Today Venice Biennale appears as a lifeline for the whole city's financial situation. It must be acknowledged that the Venetian art Foundation did not react to this crisis as some important U.S public art institutions did, firing part of their staff or erasing their educational department. The Venice Biennale Foundation did not cancel any of its planned events: at present everything is postponed to September. Good news indeed! Yet facing Covid-19 pandemic could be the chance for a radical rethinking of the social role of the arts and art institutions instead of the mere desperate attempt to hold on.

Populist neoliberal mayor of Venice Luigi Brugnaro, for his part, responds to the pandemic following the well known recipe of the shock economy: once the emergency is over, the motto will be “as before, more than before”, meaning: more tourism, more hotels, more cruise ships, more cuts to public services, more events to make up for the the time lost.

I cannot predict the future, I don't know if anything will ever be as before. For sure something will definitely change. In two, three or four years – maybe once Covid-19 vaccine is available – things

will go back to “normal” at least for a while until “the next big one”, the next global epidemic. “Normal” meaning: more than half a million visitors largely flying in to Venice from all over the world, territorial branding, real estate rents parasitizing the art sector and the collective symbolic capital of the city, blue chip art galleries influencing artistic choices with their financial firepower, frenetic networking at overcrowded poor-quality-drinks parties, crazy deadlines making it impossible for workers to meet safety standards, massive use of unpaid or underpaid labour, etc. I do not know if we’ll get back to normality. Yet, if that is the normality, I hope we won’t.

Reflecting on a different Venice Biennale is no easy task. La Biennale is a complex machine the International Art Exhibition together with the Cinema Film Festival being only the most visible moments of the overall activity of the Foundation organised in seven departments: Art, Architecture, Cinema, Theatre, Dance, Music and the ASAC (the historical Archive for contemporary art).

Even if my main object analysis here is Venice Biennale – specifically referring to the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions – at the time of the present crisis I want to highlight some issues that could be relevant in rethinking large scale exhibitions in general, or at least for those situated in small and medium size cities. The former not being a Eurocentric position, it is actually based on the fact that the diffusion of the format of the neoliberal art event is common to many cities in the era of rampant globalization – as largely analyzed in the last decades –⁰¹ Venice being the first of its kind only. The last twenty years of Venice Biennale almost all under the presidency of Paolo Baratta, are considered as a kind of leftist management masterpiece. In a nutshell: Baratta and his team were able to lift La Biennale out of both a financial and positioning crisis. They did it not following blindly the classical neoliberal recipes. Actually they alternated between cuts and recruitments. For example: in 2009 La Biennale decided to outsource a few dozens of workers mostly employed as room attendants, while in recent years it developed a policy of massive recruitment bringing its full-time staff to the considerable number of 111 employees. Doing so between 2009 and 2016 La Biennale got rid of older, less qualified, unionized workers, making space for younger, more flexible, more qualified and not unionized labor force. It did so updating the tasks of some traditional professional roles: room attendants were partly replaced

by the so called “active catalogues” – workers in the function both of overseers and cultural mediators. Furthermore, to avoid the generalized use of illegal employment by many national pavilions, La Biennale invited all National Participations to meet at least Italian labor-rights standards or better.

Baratta renewed the formula of the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions: he increased the use of the Arsenale space, imposed annual alternation of International Art and Architecture Exhibitions, intensified the activities of the Foundation and reduced what were not national participations or collateral events to a single curator’s exhibition. Doing so Baratta was able to dramatically improve the Foundation’s financial performance. At the same time he programmatically insisted on two main strategies. First, he rejected any easy managerial rhetoric to the point of suppressing the marketing department. La Biennale, for example, defines its audience as “visitors” to convey the highly individual and unique experience of a visit as opposed to its events being reduced to mere products. This attitude though, despite presenting itself as anti-managerial, is in reality a very common marketing strategy. Second: Baratta proudly reaffirms the complete intellectual autonomy both from the State and from the commercial art circuit for the institution he represents together with the chosen curators or department directors. It could definitely be discussed to what extent this autonomy does exist. Nevertheless the main point in the hands of the Foundation remains its growing financial autonomy due essentially to La Biennale’s exponential growth as an event. Like this assuming a good market performance immediately translates into intellectual autonomy. Not to be too ideological, in a country like Italy – where politicians are not shy about using the culture as an opportunity for cronyism and consensus building – such a point has its own weight. If a relatively effective independence from the state interference may be true for what concerns the curators’ exhibitions – Italian participation still being often damaged by direct ministerial management – when referring to Biennale’s autonomy from the market one could argue that although La Biennale is not a fair, the production money of global commercial galleries, and the millions of euros raised by the selected curators coming from different donors, do have a direct impact on what is shown in the end. The point is: if not now, then when should we try to push for a radical transformation of art institutions? If not now, then when should we try to abandon the paradigm of growth attached to the

neoliberal concept of the event? I have already made the attempt to articulate a critique of the neoliberal event as opposed to the event conceived as a radical rupture of linear temporality.⁰² The negative effects of a typical neoliberal art event – some of them briefly mentioned above questioning the “normality” of large scale exhibitions – were already evident enough before Covid-19 crisis to desire something different. The pandemic simply accelerates the need for a structural challenge to this paradigm.

In the next few years, tourism, mobility, art logistics will radically change. How do we want to transform what Gregory Sholette refers to as our bare art world?⁰³ We should not leave neoliberalism free to operate its own adjustments, we should not permit it to go back and operate in favour of the business and the markets: an endless spiral of accumulation at the expenses of hyper-mobile crowds, with privilege, exploitation, precarity and poverty cohabit and overlap. Now we can think of something new!

Do we really want to move towards the nightmare of a rarefied scenario made of online auctions, where art objects prices rise together with their status of safe-haven assets; online art schools with same fees and debts yet easier discipline under the slogan of innovation + individualization; where the contemplation dispositif of the white cube shifts from the ritual to the medical becoming in the name of social distancing a space even more exclusive than before: the reassuring sanitized space ready to welcome the rich global elite of potential buyers.⁰⁴

This pandemic is but the current precipitation of a larger and older crisis that makes this about capitalism as a peculiar ecological regime.

Years ago David Quammen wrote epidemics are becoming more and more frequent because of the increasing pressure on the ecosystem and the increasing violence of extractivism.⁰⁵ A violence that grew parallel to the development of neoliberal globalization. This implies several considerations. First: the need to claim for a process of global art system degrowth is not a consequence of Covid-19 outbreak, as something deeply connected to the need of putting an end to extractivism dynamics as recently expressed by millions of people marching in the streets for climate justice.⁰⁶ Second: we are facing the uncomfortable task of embarking in a

critique to globalization and art globalization that does not end up by fueling a nationalistic or neo-reactionary rhetoric together with its aesthetic companion, provincialism. At the same time we can not accept the simplistic idea of going back to local, to small homogeneous communities, to the dream of an Arcadic proximity that could not be reached if not at the expense of the vast majority of human and non-human beings.

Nonetheless, it is time to recognize that the late 90's “great leap forward” in the art world – whose advantages even some of us may have enjoyed too with its utopian image of a world as an interconnected archipelago of dialoguing differences like for example the powerful assemblage Glissant-Obrist-Utopia Station – was indeed realized. Yet this achievement was the result of a plan based on the nature of capitalism where – borrowing Maurizio Lazzarato's expression in a recent public talk and insisting on the metaphor of the archipelago – “a few Islands of abstract labor are surrounded by an ocean of exploitation” and – I my add – extractivism.

We need a social, political and financial shift.

We also need new narrations.

We need art spaces to be inhabited by new epistemologies.

La Biennale – despite being on an island – can't change for the best in absence of a complete overturn of national Italian and European answers to the present crisis.

It will be almost impossible for La Biennale to engage in a serious process of degrowth and of re-imagination of its phenomenology and its relationship with the city and with the world if European institutions will once again opt for austerity measures and strict fiscal impositions. In other words if Europe will fail again, if it will not abandon the logic of debt to reinforce welfare measures towards a universal basic income we will have likely terrible outcomes in terms of spread of poverty and reinforcement of nationalist rhetoric. We need an overturn out of austerity measures that could also allow La Biennale to be less dependent on the influence of private capitals. Because the revenues – especially those of the International Art Exhibition and the Cinema Festival – are too important to keep

the whole machine running. Because even if the International Architecture Exhibition has considerably grown through time, its accounts are still structurally in red, and its sustainability is granted by the impressive International Art Exhibition's financial performance. Because royalties are important. Because more national participations and more collateral events imply more hype, more rent, more work, more job opportunities. In the last twenty years young labor force was able to build a life project around the big event of La Biennale: an army of freelancers, small business, cooperatives of room attendants, technicians, workers, deputy curators, location managers etc.⁰⁷ In Marxian terms this should be the time for this technical composition to turn into a political composition, time to claim for quarantine income⁰⁸ and universal basic income, to avoid a catastrophic race to lowering prices. For this reason European policies are crucial to determine if art workers will be forced to an individual competition/struggle for the survival – not having time or energies to struggle for a radical change of art institutions – or if they will be given the basic conditions to organize themselves to open up the crisis of the neoliberal apparatus and not to be doomed to sink with it.

More public investments in contemporary art is not enough. Money should also be invested in a different way.⁰⁹ If in the next few years La Biennale will have to face a forced or – less likely – chosen degrowth, in a climate of austerity the army of freelancers will be the first to pay its cost while the shameful group of Venice based space-renting agencies under disguise of a cultural institutions will probably survive through a drastic cut of the cost of labour in the wait for better times to come.

While we all should be working in the direction of a general shift outside of the neoliberal model, it is yet urgent to start a collective reflection on how La Biennale and other institutions in the global art circuit should radically be transformed.

Few years ago in one of my articles I addressed the issue of what I defined as alter-institutionalism. I divide alter-institutions in two main categories: governmental alter-institutions – often temporary and created by artists – and autonomous alter-institutions – founded by artists together with other people during social movements outbreaks often in occupied urban spaces, abandoned institutes or old archives. I also tried to list a series of challenges

towards alter-institutionalism isolating seven key problems: capture, subjectivation, governance and juridical structure, political geography and decolonization, binarism between slowing down and acceleration, queering, radical (imaginary) economy.¹⁰ And even if also official art institutions – at least the public ones – with various degree of success or failure can deliberately choose to trigger processes of self alter-institutionalization (i.e. L'Internationale, a confederation of European museums) it is no time to rely on those institutions' goodwill. For example: La Biennale considerably developed its educational activities (large part of the audience being schools pupils visiting the exhibition during the fall), it created a certain temporal continuity of activities (i.e. Biennale College or the Carnival for Kids) and at the same time it invested some energies in promoting projects in Venetian mainland most of the time considered less appealing than the charming territory of the islands. We have the picture of an institution that is certainly not dogmatically for-profit or event-oriented, especially in its effort to meaningfully interact with the city and the regional school system (granting very democratic access standards). Yet, paradoxically, the same reformist nature of its governance makes it work as an important ideological function in the neoliberal Venice territory, providing to it a critical extension, a space where art is free to express its critical subjective potential in a progressive corporate environment, while at the same time avoiding any direct role and real attempt to criticize tourism extractivism. Quite a good (public) company, in a very bad city (!)

Under this perspective Venice Biennale appears as an exception in relation to its context: the city of Venice being undoubtedly socially impoverished by forty years of neoliberalism is today perceived as a mere beneficiary of Venice Biennale's presence more than its serious possible interlocutor. Nonetheless I consider Venice social impoverishment – the progressive flight of its inhabitants and their homogenization in terms of class and race – as the main reason for re-imagining a possible relationship of La Biennale within the context of the city. It would be too simplistic to reduce Venice to a city contended on the one side by a reactionary profit-oriented lower class mostly employed in commerce and tourism, and on the other side the petty bourgeoisie of the left nostalgic of its declining prestige. If it is true that – from a social point of view – the last years were marked by episodic and weak social attempts to correct La Biennale's policies (i.e. in 2009 with the protest against

the externalization of a few dozens of room attendants, and in the more recent years, the campaign against La Biennale monopolistic use of Arsenale); it is also true that the image of La Biennale as an oasis in the desert of the city seems to me pretty much informed by a neoliberal gaze. A gaze recognising almost total agency to corporate subjects, denying it to civil society; a gaze refusing to acknowledge what Venice is still able to express in terms of social movements, self-organization and resistant forms of life.

Only a social mobilization will be able to modify this institutional mentality. The revolution of art institutions could only be initiated by, and will only march parallel to a much wider revolution. A revolution able to make significant steps forward on different yet interconnected grounds: the achievement of a universal basic income and new housing rights; a serious commitment on climate justice towards the end of extractivism; the reconstruction of a democratic health-care system damaged by decades of privatizations; the end of gender, race, class and species asymmetries; all elements that structure and permeate the current social, financial and political order.

As art workers we must be aware that we have a role to play, yet this is not a challenge to be faced from within the short horizon of art professionalism.

That being said, the question is: in what direction should we push to open up the crisis of the neoliberal art event to the point that it will turn into something different?

I'd like to suggest a few points trying to start answering this question focusing on the two cases of Venice Biennale International Art and Architecture Exhibitions – with absolutely no ambition of completeness and with no illusion of universality.



The red carpet of the Cinema Festival, occupied by the Venice Climate Camp activists, September 7, 2019. Courtesy of [Globalproject.info](https://globalproject.info)

1.

The Context. From the creative to the caring city

We all know how misleading the “creative city” definition is just another name for the old neoliberal city. Here the subcategory of art, in a mono-dimensional way, is understood as a booster for financial growth. Extensive literature proves that the trickle down effect does not really work and Venice is no exception. As mentioned above Venice Biennale represents an important professional opportunity for thousands of resident cultural workers, yet the ones who benefit the most from it are landlords or private foundations renting spaces to a plethora of “collateral events”. Though allowing some people to resist in the historical city centre, La Biennale is actually attracting are not new residents, but new capitals and it represents much of a bigger opportunity for real estate rent than for labor. Despite its cultural character, Venice Biennale’s underlying logic is no different than other tourism-based events, for example in the way it increases tourist apartments causing the loss of houses for residents. The result is a unique marvelous city with a lot of art and a very little life: the perfect context where to base private art foundations linked to global capitals – as it usually happens.

Covid-19 pandemic invites us to rethink art institutions and art practices: not more boosters for uncontrolled financial growth, but useful aesthetic/political dispositifs to turn our cities into caring cities. The urge is to re-imagine forms of common life and of commonality out of the techno-authoritarian turn coming along with social distancing. Art must even more embrace the challenge to place at the center of the political scene the body – human, posthuman, non-human. It can do so by abandoning the global gatherings of networking audiences that characterize large-scale exhibitions, big museums, international fairs, etc. I do not foster a return to classical avant-garde, nor do I intend the role of art as that of a possible guide for society. What I envision is imagination and critical speculation going together with a material process of transformation of the institutional art field: a process where both autonomy – as the subjective power of the encounter with an artwork – and heteronomy – as the process of erosion of art disciplinary borders into non-art and into the social dimension – are mobilized.

2.

The Event. From Exhibition to Habitation

The Biennale should not think of itself primarily as an event centered around an exhibition. I love exhibition as a form of language, and I am not suggesting that shows should be taken out of the equation – it would be an absurdity and a loss. My question is: do we really need a machine attracting tens of thousands of people for the opening, and then having to work hard to create an audience for the remaining period of the event? Do we really think it essential to have such a large number of artists invited to produce pieces for the exhibition? Could we not rather think of a Curator’s Exhibition where the curator invites the artists – even in smaller numbers – to intervene in and outside the main venues of the Giardini and the Arsenale with projects having a longer duration, i.e. two years? The idea far from wanting La Biennale turn into a huge residency project rather intends to shift attention from “the showing” to “the inhabiting” allowing a new space-time dimension for projects that want to engage with the context and that until now too often result in paternalistic and unattended social counseling. This model could also limit the influence of directly sponsored-by-private galleries object-driven art – with no intention on my side to exalt any easy anti-object rhetoric. It could also favour the interactions between Art and Architecture participants. Following what La Biennale recently did for the International exhibition inviting the” national participations” to follow the themes proposed by the curators one could imagine inviting the Countries to think of long-term projects. The result would at least be a permanent use of the pavilions and of L’Arsenale spaces which at the moment remain closed and inaccessible for six months every year. This model, ideally, could also generate a labor force less obsessed by the frenetic deadline-fever of the neoliberal event – by its nature concentrated on the vernissage and the finissage – and it would generate professional opportunities distributed in time and open to encourage collaboration between local workers, architects, artists, curators, etc.

One could argue this proposal’s contradictions. For example one may say it would favour the diffusion of La Biennale’s brand through the space-time matrix of the city as a sort of deeper and larger form colonization by a powerful cultural institution. Yet sadly

this already happened, an emblematic example is that during the period of the Exhibitions the red lion of La Biennale looms on almost every door in the city. Its corporate colonization will only be over if the Biennale will acquire a totally different social function. In the meantime the International Art “Habitation” should limit the earnings linked to the real estate rent by regulating the market of hospitality spaces for the exhibitions. Hypothetically speaking imposing a limitation i.e. 100 square meters could not be rented for more than 1.500 euros per month. This would bring several results: on the one side the warehouse or building owners, often families, would still earn more than a standard two-years rent contract; on the other side, big private agencies and fake location managers disguised as cultural institutions would have less margin for their speculations and local activities would find more spaces to let at cheaper prices. Last but not least, cheaper location prices will allow access to the city to more independent organizations and would free resources to be directly invested in the projects. Two more points on this proposal. First point: would artists still be interested in coming to Venice? The way I see it, artists more than ever would, if La Biennale were able to lead a change of perspective to renew the intuition of its founders. After all, since we are facing a wider local-and-global crisis, wouldn't it be time to renew the criteria by which certain cities got outstanding on the world's map of culture? Second point: Venice is a city with a small and quite homogenous population where social art experiments too often result as boring and empty rituals. Venice population is used to art and not so available to be the object of paternalistic aesthetic practices. So would the idea of an International Art Exhibition working on the more diverse and inhabited Venetian mainland be enough to save this project from long-term boredom and frustration or would it be destined to fail? This is indeed a real concern. To increase projects in Mestre and Marghera would definitely be important but we should not miss the main point. The challenge would exactly be to create a different framework for social art and for art in general to push the Biennale – together with its artists, curators and organizations – out of its comfort zone. To push them out of the repeated schemes of social art as on-demand assistance to subaltern subjectivities, out of the idea of participation and dialogue as mediation between conflicting social actors. To push them out of the exotic search for local wonders. The challenge La Biennale should offer to the world of art could be to invite some of its members to inhabit for two years the void caused by

decades of neoliberal policies. To eventually acknowledge that this void is full of resistances, instead of trying to fill it up by creating stereotypical local figures to address to. Like many other touristic cities, before Covid-19 Venice was full of people and empty of life, now the people are gone and all we are left with is life regulated by social distancing. A title – or a program – needed today could be “Inhabiting the void, covering the distance”.

3.

Mobility. From entrepreneurial nomadism to radical permanence

radical permanence intends to be a critique to a certain regime of mobility. It sums together the right-to-move and the ability to collectively organize permanence, to build alter-institutions, to create autonomous cultural and democratic infrastructures in the places we live in. Today's art system is designed to incessantly move us from one place to the other and better by plane. Our ecological footprint as a community casts a shadow over our cultural impact. The ecological un-sustainability of the art world alone should impose a change. Yet this is not the only problem. The majority of us move – or better – have no choice but to be moved. We recognize ourselves as a nomadic superficially sympathetic often ruthless international community of art workers. Besides the necessary consideration that many different art worlds exist with their different value systems, it is time to admit that our deterritorialized community model is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Some, thanks to the arts, are able to move away from countries and contexts where dictatorships and authoritarian regimes are in place, and that's a good thing. Still, as individualized entrepreneurs of ourselves while we move – to the next project, to the art school, to the residency, to that biennial or that museum – the old and new neoliberal art institutions together with policy-makers and highly-mobile financial capitals are able to design and dictate urban processes. A power capable of long-term transformations of the places we live in, capable of designing the development of physical territories permanently influencing the life of millions of people around the world through gentrification, real estate speculation, urban renewal. Despite the growing popularity and success of critical thinking, activist art and social practices, we lost – did we ever have it? – our grip on permanence. We stay

for too short in far too many places. Our good intentions feed the apparatus of neoliberal governance: dialogical and relational practices accepted with enthusiasm to reduce participation to a mere mediation of the conflict. We need to participate in conflict instead, not to quell it. Things that require time, commitment, organization, care abandoning any paternalistic temptation. We do feel the tension towards society. Yet this tension is effectively realized only at the moment of the mass social movements' outbreak. We must rethink permanence, duration, mobility. We must rethink engagement with our context in political terms. Radical permanence is made of a different temporal matrix and of course it involves a different relationship to space, one that is both within and outside the borders of the protected space of the art, representing at the same time the affirmation of its autonomy and a threat to its existence.

Radical permanence does not mean absence of mobility. On the contrary, it is its essential feature: the right-to-move for everybody despite its race, class or gender. Mobility should be conceived from a totally different political point of view, an ecological one. No interest in following the art circus of privilege. Yet, in a moment where in some parts of Italy we are not allowed to cover a distance of more than 200 meters away from our homes, we feel the urge to disobey social distancing restrictions. Radical permanence aims at building safe permanent spaces for bodies of all kinds to move together starting from within the same building, to the same block, to the neighborhood, to the city and so on.

Radical permanence claims for the legitimacy of democratic forms of life, rejects the permanence of the state of exception, rejects techno-authoritarianism and a life mediated by proprietary digital-technologies and moves towards the founding of new alter-institutions.

Radical permanence does not bow to the nostalgia for the local, nor does it embody primitivism of any kind. According to its name and program, accelerationism very quickly turned towards a neo-reactionary teleology. We think that creation and the use of free digital infrastructure is a key task. While forced digital mediation of the body is a political tragedy, the coding of digital space against global capitalist platforms should be taken very seriously. The digital infrastructure for radical permanence should be a tool to

break the process of individualization of people, to make them gather and come together in the physical space, it should aim to organize political common encounters as opposed to tear us apart into the depoliticized isolations of individual time.

Can a Biennale do anything about it? For sure assuming the responsibility to solve this problem would really go beyond its prerogatives. Yet a Biennale could at least incorporate the concept of sustainable mobility where the exponential growth in the number of artists, national participations, collateral events and visitors would not equate success; it could hint certain kinds of art practices that engage on longer terms with communities not to keep on feeding real estate rent and, last but not least it could allow free access to all Venetian residents.

4.

The Archive. From La Biennale's history to the histories for the Future Biennale

Since the late 90s it has been impossible to resist the archival impulse. The end of socialism brought with it the end of history – a joke compared to the end of the conditions for history itself to be that comes with the current climate crisis. The archive has represented the narrative matrix to re-assert an epic of art beyond postmodern pastiche, neo-lyricism and the aesthetics of art as commodity. If history got disqualified then the archive helped artists to put back their feet on the fertile ground of histories – in the plural – abandoning teleological violence and reflecting on the relationship between past, present and future.

The ASAC – the historical archive of contemporary art – is one of the departments structuring the Biennale's Foundation. It can count on different fonds documenting the history of La Biennale and a library. La Biennale has already affirmed its will to develop the ASAC adding a research section besides the chore archiving mission. Good news indeed, when also followed by important financial investments and the creation of a research team whose purpose goes beyond the present mere "valorization" of archived items and propaganda. During the last years the digitalization of the archive has accelerated, yet access is still regulated by rigid corporate standards. If La Biennale intends the archive to become

a productive source of knowledge, new access criteria should be put into place starting with the possibility of free reproduction/use of documents in case of proven non-commercial use. The Archive being today the only department of La Biennale permanently open to the public represents the ideal interface for the Institution with both the academic world and with the city, since it preserves the precious memory of a relationship. Rich in history the Archive should become the source of counter-histories going beyond the ideological univocal narration of the neoliberal art institution: an archive as a untamed memory of an institution: no more the cornerstone of its identity, but a mutating virus mining its epistemological normality.

01 A recent example of the neoliberal framework structuring and (at the same time) threatening large scale exhibitions, is the case of Documenta 14 (2017). Its financial difficulties brought to light a double critique. First, the critique of the curator's idea to bring the exhibition to Athens as a way to increase the institution's cultural capital by "colonising" a city hit by austerity. Second, the curator himself and the CEO accused the City and the Hessian government of trying to use the bankruptcy as an excuse to reterritorialize Documenta in Kassel. Implicitly Szyczyk denounces the stakeholders preference towards an exhibition working as a tourism promotion agency rather than as a global critical tool.

02 Marco Baravalle, *For a Critique of The Neoliberal Event. Picasso in the Dispositif of Urban Souvenir Formation*, in "Keep Reading Giving Rise. Rogelio López Cuenca", Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2019.

03 "An art world where the interweaving of art and capitalism is self-evident". See Gregory Sholette, *Delirium and resistance: Activist art and the crisis of capitalism*. London: Pluto Press, 2017.

04 See Brian O'Doherty's reading of the white cube as a ritualistic space for western bourgeoisie. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside The White Cube. The Ideology Of The Gallery Space*, Lapis Press, San Francisco, 1986.

05 David Quammen, *Spillover*, W. W. Norton Company, 2013.

06 In Venice, on September the 7th 2019, the activists of the Venice Climate Camp occupied for six hours the red carpet of the Venice Film Festival. The occasion was filmed and became part of Oliver Ressler's "Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart: Venice Climate Camp" (2019)

07 We don't have clear numbers concerning how many art workers live in Venice,

but in an historical city where more or less 50.000 residents are overwhelmed by more or less 30.000.000 of tourists per year, even a few thousand people make a difference, especially if they are not directly employed in the tourism industry.

08 The Quarantine income is a campaign initiated in Italy by an independent union called ADL (Associazione Difesa Lavoratori) after the pandemic outbreak. It demands urgent welfare measures and has quickly gained national diffusion. Many workers from the art and entertainment business joined the campaign.

09 If a prominent figure of the art system like Hans Ulrich Obrist recently advocated for an updated New Deal program to support the arts in this difficult time of ours (on a smaller scale, the Swiss curator's appeal could be compared to the recent letter by Mario Draghi, the former president of the ECB who, strong with his status of guardian of austerity, dared to ask for drastic war-socialism-style measures), public support should be addressed in the direction of a radical rethinking of the role of culture in contemporary society. It should also be noted that even if la Biennale's activities are largely supported by the different earnings resulting from ticket sales, sponsorships, royalties, etc. (for a total of €26.107.000, according to the official budget of La Biennale 2019) the institutional balance sheet also includes €19.192.000 of public contributions for the same year. So, if it is more than likely that earnings will drastically decrease in 2020, a further public financing of the institution would be acceptable on the condition of an overall recalibration of its purposes. First of all, the Venetian foundation should not cut its labor costs, calculated in 2019 around €7.000.000. Still this would not be enough as this sum only represents a partiality of the value of labor generated around the various events, a labor whose costs are covered by dozens of organizations landing in Venice on the occasion of the different cultural activities. The official budget of La Biennale di Venezia is available on line in the section "Trasparenza", on the foundation website: <https://www.labiennale.org/it/trasparenza>

10 Marco Baravalle, *Alteristituzioni. Tra governamentalità e autonomia*. In *Opera Viva*. <https://operavivamagazine.org/alteristituzioni-e-arte/>



Reduce Art Flights

Gustav Metzger

2007-2019

Project documented online by *Latitudes* (reduceartflights.ltlds.org)

RAF / Reduce Art Flights is a campaign which upholds that the art world-artists, curators, critics, gallerists, collectors, museum directors, etc. – could or should diminish its use of aeroplanes. It was initiated by the artist **Gustav Metzger** (10 April 1926, Nuremberg – 1 March 2017, London).⁰¹

[The RAF website](#) is maintained by the curatorial office [Latitudes](#) as a resource for the initiative and as a location for future elaborations of its aims.

The RAF acronym deliberately echoes the Royal Air Force – the aerial warfare branch of the British military – as well as the militant left-wing group known as the Red Army Faction. The campaign had been mooted by Metzger for a year or so, before being realized as a mass-produced leaflet on the occasion of the artist's participation in 'Skulptur Projekte Münster 07' (Sculpture Projects Muenster 07) in 2007. The design of the 5000 leaflets was based on a 1942 Royal Air Force poster that detailed the aerial bombardment of Germany during the Second World War. The project conjoins the historical memory of airborne destruction (Münster was among several cities devastated by air-raids), with Metzger's "ongoing and endless opposition to capitalism", and his "objection to the massive commercial growth of the art industry", exemplified by the unprecedented art tourism of the 2007 "Grand Tour" (the coincidence of the 52nd Venice Biennial; the five-yearly Documenta 12, Kassel; and the once-a-decade Sculpture Projects Muenster itself).⁰²

The RAF initiative is neither a work of art, nor an idea over which Metzger claimed ownership or leadership. This website (and this text) grew out of the reactivation of the RAF initiative as part of the exhibition '[Greenwashing](#)'. Environment, Perils, Promises and Perplexities' (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy, 29 February – 18 May 2008). On this occasion the curators *Latitudes* and *Ilaria Bonacossa* were guided by the artist's advice concerning how the campaign could be extended. RAF Torino consisted of the printing of a new version of the leaflet, made available in the

galleries and inserted into international mailings in connection with the exhibition, and the distribution and attempted implementation of its inherent request to “consider forms of travel and transportation other than flying” in the process of the organisation of ‘Greenwashing’.⁰³

Leafletting is one of the most elementary forms of campaigning and propaganda. Somewhat ironically in this context, among its most effective applications in the last century has been through the deployment of aeroplanes to drop leaflets as a form of psychological warfare. The plea to reduce art flights – however viable or compelling it may be – does not attempt to address practical means to alleviate art world aviation itself. Instead, Metzger suggested the “reduce, reuse, recycle” mantra of environmentalism be transformed and integrated into a more radical spectrum of consideration of humanity’s destructive potential. With full cognisance that it is “a drop in the ocean”, the RAF manifesto nevertheless invites voluntary abandonment – a fundamental, personal, bodily rejection of technological instrumentalization and a vehement refusal to participate in the mobility increasingly endemic to the globalized art system.⁰⁴

Text by Max Andrews⁰⁵

01 “At last year’s Art Basel I felt that something should or could be done in relation to the flights, both of artists and gallery people, and the transportation of works of art.” Gustav Metzger quoted in Mark Godfrey, “Protest and Survive”, *Frieze*, Issue 108, June–August 2007.

02 *Ibid.*

03 Gustav Metzger, telephone conversation with Max Andrews, 1 November 2007.

04 Gustav Metzger quoted in Mark Godfrey, *op. cit.*

05 This text is based on a version first published in the exhibition catalogue *‘Greenwashing. Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities’*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, edited by Latitudes & Ilaria Bonacossa, published by the The Bookmakers Ed., Turin, 2008, ISBN: 978-88-95702-01-8.

HOW TO LAND ON TERRESTRIAL FUTURES?

Green Mobility

Julie's Bicycle

May 2011

Extracts from the original paper publication by On The Move

Over the last five years sustainability issues have, at last, been recognised as significant and of relevance to the cultural sector. Sustainability touches all aspects of our creative sectors. It stimulates carbon as well as financial savings, communicates a positive brand to audiences and artists, preempts regulatory demands and builds resilience into our future business models. However, while awareness is strong, finding solutions that are relevant and realistic, tailored to the realities of touring, is much more elusive. This piece of work, commissioned by OTM, is an attempt to address the core problem – moving productions contingent on travel and transportation – as sustainably as possible. Arts are characterised by creativity, resourcefulness and innovation. This guide hopes to galvanise these qualities and inspire greater ambition so that, together, the arts can play a pivotal role in our future.

Alison Tickell

Director, Julie's Bicycle

What you can do

Environmental action is an ongoing process that can be understood in four parts:

- commitment to environmental issues
- understanding your environmental impacts
- improving your environmental impacts
- communicating your impacts and improvements

This chapter shows in practical detail how you can take environmental action in your professional life. The tips are addressed to those managing and running venues. They also address membership organisations and funding bodies.

Venues

For Managers, Facility Managers, Green Champions

Commitment

- Develop an environmental policy to cover at least energy, water and waste impacts. (www.juliesbicycle.com/resources)
- Give a team member responsibility for coordinating environmental efforts. Ensure contractual discussions encompass environmental impacts.
- If you use an exclusion policy ensure this is rational and not preventing a touring production from presenting work outside your audience catchment.
- Make information about in-house production specifications and local suppliers available to incoming productions (ideally online).

Understanding

- Use the free web-based IG (Industry Green) venue tool or equivalent to audit your company's environmental impacts (energy, water, waste, travel). www.juliesbicycle.com/resources
- Use a tool to monitor energy use, ideally once a week. Improvement
- Create an environmental improvement plan with targets and timelines for reducing environmental impacts.
- Use at least a proportion of money generated from venue energy savings for funding further environmental improvements.

Communication

- Communicate to board, staff, suppliers, incoming productions and audiences the environmental impacts of the venue and the efforts being taken to reduce those impacts.
- Apply for an environmental performance certification that is relevant to your venue.
- Prepare a case study of your venue's 'greening' experience (positive and negative) to share learning with colleagues.

Food and Drink

- Develop a sustainable procurement policy for food and drinks.
- Learn about the environmental impacts of food and drink sold at the venue: minimise animal products and maximise organic, local and seasonal choices.
- Monitor catering energy and identify opportunities for energy savings.
- Monitor food waste and reduce over-ordering. Consider a composting service for food waste and compostable packaging.
- Work with contracted food and drink concessions to offer consumables (including packaging, cutlery and serving receptacles) with low environmental impacts.

Publicity materials and merchandise

- Use electronic-based publicity material as much as possible over printed.
- Ensure all printed materials have recycled content and/or use FSC paper and are printed using non-toxic and biodegradable inks.
- Select the correct size of material to maximise content.
- Use merchandisers that have environmental credentials, for example, t-shirts that have a product carbon label with the emissions per t-shirt displayed.

Audience Travel

- Provide public transport information to your audiences on your website, including a travel carbon calculator so that they can investigate the mode and route with the lowest emissions.
- Offer a combined performance and public transport ticket.

- Offer only a limited number of car spaces to encourage car sharing and use of public transport.
- Provide bike racks at the venue and let audiences know via the website and tickets that racks are available.
- Make information available on car-share services from the venue website.
- Discuss putting on extra public transport services, and synchronising services with the start and end of events, with local travel operators.

Membership Organisations

- Make environmental sustainability a standing agenda item.
- Keep up to date on environmentally related legislation, financial and economic trends as well as audience concern.
- Signpost members to resources for reducing the environmental impacts of touring.
- Develop a charter for members, which sets out environmental principles, and includes a commitment to monitor and reduce environmental impacts.
- Recognise and award members that are environmental leaders, and publicise models of good practice.
- Use your lobbying power to push for further development of environmentally sustainable technologies.
- Collect, collate and report statistics relevant for monitoring environmental efforts of the sector.

Funding Organisations

- Ensure environmental sustainability is a core issue on the agenda for strategy development.
- Signpost to information on emerging practice for low environmental impact touring within the performing arts sector.
- Support organisations providing resources and training to help arts organisations embed environmental decision-making in all areas of their activity.
- Set environmental guidelines and reporting requirements to funded organisations.
- Assess the funding support given to organisations on environmental criteria in addition to artistic and financial

criteria.

- Publicise models of good practice, including outstanding creative achievement using green technology.

Hot Topics

The following set of pieces cover a wide range of hot topics on sustainability that are relevant to the artistic sector.

Science Says

Our climate is regulated by a balance of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere such as water vapour, carbon dioxide and methane. Without these gases solar heat from the sun would escape back into space and the planet would be uninhabitable. Because of their warming nature these gases are referred to as greenhouse gases (GHG), and the phenomenon is known as the greenhouse effect. Earth's climate has varied naturally in the past, but the human activities of burning fossil fuels, industrial agriculture and land use are causing a rapid increase in the concentration of GHGs, which is enhancing the greenhouse effect and resulting in hotter overall mean temperature and variable, extreme weather conditions.

Our climate supports rich and diverse ecosystems which have determined how humans have evolved and how we currently live. Disrupting the natural equilibrium of GHGs is already having profound effects on the planet and our consequent way of life.

Key Facts

Current global gas concentrations in atmosphere

- Carbon dioxide: 390 parts per million (ppm) – exceeds the natural range experienced in the last 650,000 years and is increasing by 1-2ppm each year
- All GHG emissions: increasing by 3.3% per annum since 2000

Effects

- Increase in global mean temperature by 0.7°C compared to pre-industrial times; a 4.9°C increase is expected by 2100
- 40% loss in arctic ice since 1980
- Rise in sea levels of 3-4 mm/year
- Increased levels of carbon dioxide absorbed by oceans is resulting in acidification

Impacts

- 20-30% of plants, animals and fish at risk of extinction with a 1.5°C-2.5°C increase
- Adverse effects on agriculture, fisheries, forests and water resources
- Countries of low latitude and many coastal regions at risk of flooding
- Increased frequency of heat waves, droughts, extreme precipitation, and related impacts (i.e. wild fires, heat stress, vegetation changes)

Uncertainty

- Scale and longevity of impacts
- Understanding of extent processes will change, such as location and intensity of monsoon cycles and La Niña and El Niño cycles

Next steps

- Stabilising global GHG emission levels between 445-535ppm (i.e. reduce current global emission levels by 50%)
- Minimising climate risks by ensuring global mean temperature does not increase by more than 2°C
- Supporting societies to adapt to climate change and impacts that are already occurring and are irreversible

The Global Response

First steps

In 1992 the United Nations convened the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro resulting in the first governance framework designed to tackle climate change on a global scale. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) aimed to stabilise global greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interferences with the climate system.

The treaty came into force in 1994 but despite its ambition it set no mandatory limits on GHG emissions and contained no enforcement mechanisms. As a result the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC was adopted in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. To date, the Protocol, which came into force in 2005, is the only legally binding global framework on climate change and represents the first attempt to monitor and

regulate global emissions. It set binding targets for 37 industrialised countries for reducing emissions by an average of 5.2% against 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012. Specifically, 15 countries within the European Union have a combined reduction target of 8% over the five-year period below 1990 levels. Developing countries were not required to reduce emissions.

The parties to the UNFCCC have met every year since 1995 in Conference of the Parties (COP) to assess progress and to advocate the global climate change governance agenda.

Climate Justice

Climate change may be a global problem requiring global solutions, but the resulting impacts will vary in scale and length depending on geographic location and specific political and economic conditions. Industrialised countries are responsible for more than ten times the average per capita emissions as compared to developing countries, but will be least affected. Already developing countries are experiencing extreme weather but these nations have the least infrastructural capacity to deal with the consequences. This is further compounded by the inevitable drive for improved living standards in emerging economies, stoking further demand for energy hungry goods and services such as those enjoyed for generations in advanced economies. Despite this difficult framework some emerging economies, such as China, are investing heavily in low carbon infrastructures and attempts to provide access to investment and knowledge transfer mechanisms to developing countries are ongoing. However, there are enormous tensions and contradictions inherent in current global governance mechanisms and much still needs to be resolved.

Climate justice – or reparation for the past and entitlement to equitable standards of living for the future – is at the heart of much climate debate. The Kyoto Protocol introduced the notion of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ to address the issue of burden (who is to blame) and of responsibility (who will take action) by committing only industrialised nations to emission reductions. However with many developing countries experiencing rapid growth – China now exceeds the USA as the world’s biggest emitter of GHGs – many industrialised countries now want to see a broader distribution of responsibility for reducing emissions.

Fiddling While Rome Burns?

A global response to the global problem of climate change must be found. However, governments and policy are not the only places for action and transformation. While an overarching agreement with targets and timelines remains crucial, business and the public also have key roles to play, and the arts is particularly important given that they are businesses which also connect in a unique way with the public as their audiences. Firstly, by demanding higher environmental standards from themselves, colleagues, suppliers and funders, the arts can lead with “bottom up” initiatives, that put pressure on governments to create workable solutions, while preparing themselves for a climate changing future. Secondly, by transforming artistic practice so it includes a consideration of environmental impacts, the arts set an example to their audiences, which strengthens the capacity of the performing arts to participate in and indeed stimulate dialogue on this most vital issue.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC – a scientific and intergovernmental institution – is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change.

Although it does not conduct new research, it reviews and assesses the most recent scientific and socio-economic information relevant to the understanding of climate change and publishes the results in comprehensive assessment reports every 5-6 years.

Controversies!

Biofuels

What they are: Fuels derived directly from living matter e.g. biodiesel, algal fuel, and bioethanol. There are three categories of biofuels which refer to the type of plant material used to create the fuel. The first category of biofuels are derived from plant material that is also a food source e.g. ethanol from corn. The second category of biofuels are derived from plant material that is not a food source such as biodiesel from inedible oil. The third category of biofuels refers to algae used to derive biodiesel. Currently only

the biofuels in the first category are economically viable at scale.

Pros: Biofuel derived from waste products (such as used cooking oil or animal carcasses) has minimal environmental and carbon issues. There could be carbon benefits if the biofuels used are reducing or preventing carbon emissions overall. Biofuel crops are one of the main markets for Genetically Modified (GM) alternatives; all crops tend to have competing uses (i.e. for food or for energy), so the GM alternatives for biofuel crops could relieve pressure on food crops.

Cons: Biofuels may compete with food production, causing spikes in food prices and/or displacement of food cultivation to un-cleared lands i.e. rainforest (land-use change is a leading factor contributing to climate change). Increased production can lead to biodiversity loss and displacement of local communities. In the tropics crop and plantations cultivation contributes to carbon emissions through the clearing of carbon-rich forests; soil erosion from intensive agricultural methods; the large use of fertilisers; and the transport of feedstock. Producing biofuels from crops, plant material and algae is expensive and not necessarily economically viable, so biofuel generation tends to be heavily subsidised by governments.

Emissions Trading

What it is: As with cultural goods, our economy is not organised to fully value environmental goods and services. As a result the implicit costs of using and/or degrading environmental goods and services are often excluded from the external price, an extrinsic cost which, in economics, is termed an “externality”. Climate change, for example, is the most dramatic example of a global negative externality. There are currently two ways to internalise the costs of climate change into our economy: taxation or a cap and trade scheme (see below and glossary). The rationale for a tax is to levy a price for carbon and, providing the price is set at the right level, low emission options will become attractive, thereby reducing carbon. The advantage of a tax is that price is certain; the disadvantage is the quantity of emissions reductions is not certain.

A cap and trade scheme turns the taxation model on its head by setting a limit on the quantity of emissions allowed over a given time period so reductions are certain, but the price per tonne will change depending on how easy it is for the economy to stay within

the emissions limit. The EU Emissions Trading Scheme for large energy users is the largest trading scheme globally. A number of governments are considering carbon taxation as an option for reducing emissions.

Pros: Taxation will give rise to revenue that could be used to reduce other distortionary taxes. It is also more transparent than a cap and trade scheme as offenders will be clear on how much they need to pay for polluting. Under a cap and trade scheme, buyers of permits will be paying a charge for polluting whereas sellers will be rewarded for having reduced. Society thus incurs the lowest possible cost because those who can reduce emissions most cheaply will do so, whilst the rest will buy permits. It is preferential to society to auction polluting permits rather give them away for free or low cost as governments can use this revenue. However, polluting industries often argue they should be rewarded pollution permits as they are at an unfair advantage against competitors outside the system or have less polluting assets to begin.

Cons: Costing carbon could lead to a negative carbon leakage i.e. placing the regulated company or government at a disadvantage when compared to non-regulated peers. There are also associated distributional impacts, as it is argued that carbon pricing could disproportionately disadvantage the poor who have limited options to change consumption patterns. With a cap and trade scheme, if the cap is too high and too many emission permits are issued, permits may have a very low price, so there will be no incentives to reduce emissions. If the cap is too low and too few permits are issued, the result will be an excessively high permit price. Furthermore, initial free allocation of permits is often dependent on historic factors, such as the existing levels of pollution from a company at the time of allocation. This creates a disincentive to pollute before being allocated permits. The scheme also has associated issues of carbon leakage i.e. decrease in national emissions of countries involved in the scheme but an overall increase in global emissions.

Nuclear Power

What it is: Nuclear power is produced by controlled nuclear reactions. Nuclear power plants use nuclear fission reactions to heat water to produce steam, which is then used to generate electricity. Around 14% of the world's energy needs are met by

nuclear power stations.

Pros: A sustainable energy source that reduces carbon emissions and increases national energy security by decreasing dependence on imported energy sources. Nuclear power produces little, if any, air pollution (i.e. smog, GHGs), and has an excellent operational safety record in the Western world. Risks of storing waste are believed to be small and further reduced by using the latest technology in reactors.

Cons: Issues with processing, transporting and storing radioactive nuclear waste. The engineering and components needed are the same as those used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons increasing the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation. Nuclear reactors are complex and often unpredictable, and in the case of nuclear accidents consequences are unknown. Environmental damage and health risks are associated with uranium mining, the raw material primarily used in nuclear reactors. New technology developed to reduce the risks associated with storing nuclear waste is argued not to be sufficiently advanced to adequately minimise risks. When the lifecycle of the nuclear fuel chain is taken into account the carbon generated is not as minimal as simply assessing emissions from the energy produced. Opposition by local communities to nuclear power plants and waste storage facilities means that finding suitable sites is difficult. Lastly, uranium is a raw material in limited supply, just like oil, that will eventually run out.

Offsetting

What it is: A carbon offset is a mechanism that allows a company, organisation or individual to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in one area of activity (e.g. building energy use or air travel) by investing in projects that seek to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions in another (i.e. energy efficiency, new clean technology, or forestation). The idea of carbon offsetting is to neutralise net emissions. The emissions saved from a carbon offset project should be certified as carbon reduction. These offset credits can then be sold and bought through the carbon market as tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. There are two types of offset credits: (i) those meeting the standards of the compliance market (i.e. EU emissions trading scheme and Kyoto Protocol) and (ii) the standards of the voluntary market (i.e. not regulated and therefore it is the responsibility of the buyer to discern if credits are resulting in environmental

benefits). Offsets are not the solution to climate change as they do not, in themselves, reduce carbon and should only be used as part of a wider climate change mitigation strategy once all other feasible reductions have been achieved. Carbon offsetting can be organised at a domestic level, but more often than not carbon offsetting schemes are a transaction between industrialised and developing countries. This is because carbon offsetting is viewed as a climate change mechanism able to facilitate clean technology and development goals in developing countries, whilst enabling industrialised countries to reduce emissions cost effectively.

Pros: A cheap, fast, and simple way to manage carbon emissions in addition to direct emission reductions. Offset projects can result in direct financial benefits or project co-benefits (i.e. access to electricity) for small communities or projects, particularly in developing countries or countries with large areas of ecologically important land.

Cons: Questionable emissions reductions which can lack transparency and accountability. Risk of fraud and profiteering by individuals and companies, especially in the voluntary market. Some offset projects have unwanted effects for local communities and also might not result in emissions reductions.

Valuing Forestation

What it is: Despite our economy being reliant on the ecosystems that surround us (e.g. forests, oceans, soil), it does not value these goods and services in financial terms. Forests in particular provide us with a huge range of goods and services e.g. water purification, soil creation, pollution dilution and waste treatment, as well as being the home of millions of species upon which our ecosystem relies. Recent land-use changes in response to increasing global population have made forests vulnerable to deforestation. Forests are large carbon stores; cutting down trees will release large amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere, further exacerbating climate change. Protecting and replanting forests will slow the rate of CO₂ going into the atmosphere. It is critical that the true value of forests is reflected in financial terms. In 2006 Sir Nicholas Stern published his seminal report 'The Economics Of Climate Change' in which he posited that the costs of avoiding a warming of 5°C through the mitigation of emissions will be 1% of GDP, compared to 5-10% of GDP for adaptation. More recently 'The Economics of

Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) (2010)' proposes a framework to account for the true value of the environment. Forests protection is a relatively low cost climate mitigation option.

Pros: The costs of conserving biodiversity compared to the benefits are in a ratio of 1:10-1:100 according to TEEB. Reflecting the true costs of using the resources provided by forests could potentially lead to their conservation, which, as well as mitigating climate change, is crucial in stopping further biodiversity loss.

Cons: It is difficult to put a value on whole ecosystems such as forests. Forests are a common asset and should remain as the 'commons'. A low price could lead to disincentives to increase deforestation.

Up in the Air or Out to Sea?

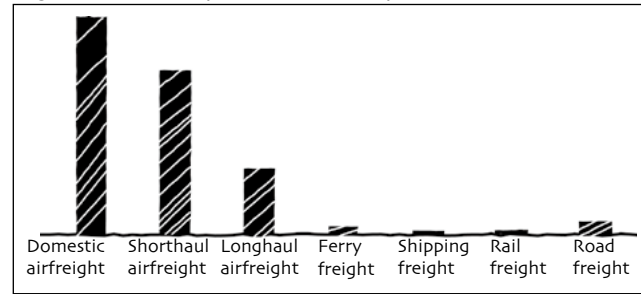
(Adapted from the original developed by Tristan Smith, University College London Energy Institute)

Art production and exhibition is, by definition, contingent on travel – often by air. At the moment the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions created by aviation and shipping account for approximately 3% of global emissions each. Neither industry shows signs of slowing down; aviation and shipping are the workhorses of globalisation, with 80% of global trade travelling by ship. Given current trends in aviation and shipping if we fail to control emissions these sectors will represent a much more significant proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions.

However due to the lack of renewable and biofuel solutions neither the aviation nor the shipping sector currently foresees an imminent switch away from liquid fossil fuels, despite the EU's efforts at regulation through the GHG Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Effective emissions reductions are only likely if organisations make careful decisions about how much they travel and where they source raw materials and products.

In terms of freighting, airfreight is easily the worst emitter (see **Figure 4**) and whenever possible preference should be given to transport by ship, rail and road. Within Europe rail and road are the more efficient modes for freighting production. For inter-continental, sea freight is the most efficient mode. However, any decision must be based on the details of the specific route.

Figure 4 Emissions per tonne.km transported



NTM (Swedish Network for Transport and the Environment), cited in the British Chamber of Shipping (2009).

When it comes to passenger transport it is harder to generalise about the relative greenhouse gas emissions of different types of transport. Europe has a comprehensive rail network, and developing a trans-European high-speed rail network is a stated goal of the European Union. However, travel by a full coach or van can be more efficient than travel by train. Long distance passenger travel by sea may not result in significant carbon savings compared to flying due to the poor fuel efficiency and occupancy of the ship services.

If aviation is the selected mode of passenger transport then you can choose the most efficient type of flight. This means travelling economy with as few changes as possible. For short-haul, business class produces 50% more emissions per passenger than economy. For long-haul journeys, first class produces 4 times more emissions per passenger than economy.

Here to Help

Art organisations will need to respond to the many issues associated with environmental sustainability for a burgeoning number of reasons: legislative or funding requirements, opportunities for operating efficiencies thereby reducing costs, preparing for future compliance, or they may consider themselves ethically responsible to their organisations, audiences and artists.

This section identifies some of the emerging resources available to help touring companies and arts organisations improve their environmental performance. These resources fall broadly into three categories:

Tools – usually online calculators and databases that offer automated but targeted information.

Guidance – on or offline publications that gather together best practice, advice, worksheets, templates and case studies to inspire improved environmental performance.

Certifications, Standards and Awards – assessment, labelling and award programmes support environmental ambitions by offering assurances that a product or service has met predetermined environmental criteria, or is complying with environmental standards. They can also provide guidance directly to the certifying or awarded organisation, by specifying what organisational practices are required to achieve a minimum level of achievement.

The options below should be seen as a starting point. Art organisations should search for local resources that can complement art-specific resources. Often local municipalities, central government environment departments, NGOs, charities or universities develop generic resources that can be beneficial to arts organisations.

Julie's Bicycle IG (Industry Green) Tools

Developed specifically for the arts and creative industries, the IG Tools are free online carbon calculators suitable for use across the world. The IG Tools measure the greenhouse gas emissions

produced by touring, venues, festivals and offices. The IG Tool will provide results on greenhouse gas emissions generated by energy, water, waste, audience and business travel.

Environmental Policy

It is beneficial for all organisations to have an Environmental Policy, which focuses on the environmental impacts created by their activities and includes commitments and strategies to reduce those impacts. Julie's Bicycle has information, guidance and templates for developing an environmental policy appropriate for your organisation. www.juliesbicycle.com/resources

Green Visual Arts: A London Case Study

Julie's Bicycle

October 2010

Extracts from the original paper publication by Greater London Authority in partnership with Julie's Bicycle and Frieze Art Fair

Getting started

Whatever the type or size of your organisation, there are three crucial places to start. There are various tools that can help you get started (www.juliesbicycle.com/ig-tools). Carrying out an audit will give you a picture of your environmental impact and identify the areas in which you can make the biggest difference.

Next, create an environmental policy and plan to manage and reduce your impact. Keep accurate records of your energy use (e.g. bills) to monitor improvements – you may need to set up a new system or use existing records and accounts. Often you'll be able to pay back any initial investment in new technology through financial savings from reduced energy, water, waste and travel bills. Relate capital expenditure to savings so you can track this 'pay back' over time.

- Make sure the whole organisation – directors and staff – is on board and allocate responsibilities.
- Establish an environment team and a network of champions with regular reviews and action planning.
- Provide staff training, update staff on progress and provide incentives for further progress – make sure everyone understands they have a role to play.
- Communicate progress to suppliers, contractors, exhibitors and audiences.

It could be useful to forge partnerships with other organisations to address many of the recommendations set out within the guide. Joint procurement of lighting and renewables, decentralised energy projects and lobbying are all areas that could be usefully shared by a broader group of organisations.

Buildings

Energy use in buildings accounts for nearly a third of London visual arts footprint. Steps that can be taken to reduce this are outlined below, ranging from simple efficiency measures to investment in renewable energy.

AREA

ACTION

Reduce Energy Use

Heating, cooling and ventilation

Set thermostats to lower temperatures in workshops and storage areas

Introduce zonal control and timers

Relax temperature and humidity controls

Insulate building fabric and improve glazing

Encourage visitors to leave wet garments in the cloakroom

Lighting

Switch to energy efficient bulbs and LED lighting

Put lighting on sensors

Reduce exterior lighting and switch off during day

Equipment

Turn it off whenever you can, and don't leave equipment on standby

Reduce all electrical requirements with voltage optimisation equipment (suitable for larger organisations)

AREA

ACTION

Explore alternative energy sources

Consider building integrated renewables such as solar electricity – you might even be able to generate an income

Explore the potential for district heating and cooling and combined cooling heat and power

Consider funds for dedicated off-site renewable installations (suitable for larger organisations or groups of organisations)

Reduce waste, reuse and recycle

Reduce waste in catering and retail facilities

Reuse exhibition programmes and paper

Recycle catering and retail waste

Compost food waste

Use mains drinking water and reusable glasses

Reduce water use

Install tap aerators

Consider water re-use and collection measures including rain water harvesting

In next retrofit update urinals, taps and toilets to minimise water use

Case studies

The National Portrait Gallery recognised the need to be more energy efficient when replacing obsolete lighting track and fittings in a number of their second floor galleries.

In 2009, the gallery took the innovative step of installing LED lighting in rooms 13 and 14. 100 watt tungsten halogen light fittings were replaced with the same number of 14 watt LED light fittings.

Electricity consumption for lighting has reduced by 68%, but total energy savings have proved greater still, due to the reduced need for cooling in these rooms (the National Portrait Gallery is required to maintain temperature at 21 degrees plus or minus one degree).

The installation in the smaller of the rooms alone is expected to Save over 5,200kWh of energy – saving £370 and 3 tonnes CO₂e per year.

LED lighting emits no ultra violet, however its colour temperature is slightly bluer than the traditional tungsten halogen lighting, which has generated some interesting academic debate. The LED lighting has been in place for 9 months and nota single visitor comment has been received about it.

Colleagues at the National Gallery, impressed by the energy efficiency and quality of this lighting, have now also adopted LED lighting in four of their rooms.

Sadie Coles HQ is reducing its environmental impact by avoiding excessive heating and cooling of the gallery space. This behaviour is translated to office operations, through recycling and a switch-off campaign.

Completed in April 2009, **Whitechapel** almost doubled in size and the existing facilities were refurbished. The architects had a clear brief to keep running costs as low as possible through passive cooling and daylighting. The project also reused and recycled many building materials.

AREA

ACTION

Reduce transport requirements

Improve load utilisation and logistics
- full loads, intelligent route planning and noempty journeys

Avoid using couriers unless absolutely necessary

Avoid air freight - switch to road where possible if fully loaded
Investigate rail and sea

Where possible collaborate with other galleries to share shipping

Improve the display

Exhibition walls

Design exhibitions to minimise the use of temporary walls

Design walls of standard dimensions that accord with the dimensions of timber and plasterboard

Through careful construction and deconstruction, reuse both timber and plaster

Exhibitions

Recommendations for reducing emissions associated with art transport and display are made. These are followed by recommendations specifically for art fairs wishing to minimise their impact.

Case studies

Stephen Friedman Gallery is reusing transport crates, or reusing the wood, wherever possible. They are also looking at how to rationalise the other shipping and packing materials.

Parasol Unit Gallery and **Cell Project Space** – reusing display walls Parasol always uses the same method to build their temporary exhibition walls, so they can be easily dismantled and the timber reused.

Cell Project Space has found a method of fixing plasterboard sheeting onto timber stud wall frames, so that walls can be dismantled with minimum damage enabling 70% of the material to be reused. The gallery invests in purchasing high quality Specification screws at 25% cost increase. The durability of the product enables them to be reused repeatedly.

Audience travel

Audience travel is responsible for 56% of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the visual arts sector in London. Audience travel is not under your direct control, and will be heavily influenced by external circumstances. Seeking to influence audience travel choices, however, remains worthwhile as it will result in the largest possible emissions savings for London.

The audience travel figure takes account of the fact that visual arts audiences coming to the city will usually have a number of reasons for travelling. We assumed that UK visitors will have two reasons for visiting while those from outside the UK have five reasons to visit. Theemissions figure has been apportioned accordingly.

Some immediate actions are:

- Informing your audience about your commitment to, and progress on, improving your environmental impacts.
- Educating your audience about their own impacts, and why it matters.
- Survey your audience to find out why they travel in the way they do, and what might make them travel differently.
- Through your marketing, website and ticket purchase process, encourage public transport use.
- Encourage walking and cycling – including the use of the cycle hire scheme.
- Consider whether you could offer incentives to those using more sustainable transport options.
- Work together with city transport operators to promote sustainable transport options.

CONCLUSION

Culture Declares Emergency

culturedeclares.org

Culture Declares Emergency is a growing international movement of individuals and organisations in the cultural sector declaring climate and ecological emergency. It follows a broader declaration movement including Climate Mobilization, Extinction Rebellion Sunrise Movement and School Strike for Climate.

It understands declaration as “a public commitment to act; it is a first step in a wider strategy for climate justice and social change” and asks: “In response to the climate & ecological emergency that we are in, what does the cultural sector need to relinquish; what might we restore and how do we build resilience as individuals and organizations? In the light of this, what kind of art & culture will we make, cherish and share?”⁰¹



Culture Declares Emergency performative occupation of Tate Modern, London Photo Ackroyd & Harvey

A few weeks after the occupation by artists and activists calling Tate Modern to pledge immediate action and declare a “climate and ecological emergency”, Tate directors responded by officially declaring climate emergency and acknowledging that “There are, nevertheless, some hard truths to face about how we operate; about the sustainability of public institutions, like our museums, and about the future of culture. Large public buildings, attracting millions of visitors from the UK and overseas, require energy. We see caring for and sharing a national art collection as a public good, but it also consumes resource. We are rooted in the UK but international in outlook: making art accessible globally depends on the movement of works of art across the world. That's why we pledge to make our long-term commitment ambitious in scope. We will interrogate our systems, our values and our programmes, and look for ways to become more adaptive and responsible.”⁰²

⁰¹ Retrieved online at culturedeclares.org

⁰² Tate Press Release 'Tate Directors declare climate emergency', 17 July 2019. Retrieved online at <https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/tate-directors-declare-climate-emergency>

We (add name) declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency
We pledge to work with and support our community and local government in tackling this Emergency, and we call on others to do the same.

These are our intentions:

1. We will tell the Truth

Governments, and their public broadcasters and cultural agencies, must tell the truth about the Climate and Ecological Emergency, reverse inconsistent policies and communicate the urgency for far-reaching systemic change.

We will communicate with citizens and support them to discover the truth about the Emergency and the changes that are needed.

2. We will take Action

Governments must enact legally binding policy measures to reduce emissions to net zero by 2025 and to reduce consumption levels.

We pledge to work towards reducing our emissions to net zero* by 2025.

We will challenge policies and actions of local and national governments and their agencies, where we interact with them, that do not help to reduce emissions or consumption levels.

We will actively work to imagine and model ways that my practice / our organisation can regenerate the planet's resources.

3. We are committed to Justice

The emergency has arisen from deeply systemic injustices. Arts and Culture can imagine and forge shifts in the ways we relate to one another and the world, in our values and behaviours.

We will do what is possible to enable dialogue and expression amidst our communities about how the Emergency will affect them and the changes that are needed.

We will support demands for more democracy within our civic institutions and government.

We believe that all truth-telling, action and democratic work must be underpinned by a commitment to justice based on intersectional principles*, led by and for marginalised people.

Declaration ends.

*Net zero means that on balance one's activities are zero emissions, taking into account all possible Greenhouse Gas emissions and actions taken to mitigate or offset those emissions.

*Awareness of how systems of power combine to multiply the impacts on those who are most marginalised in society.

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DOWN TO EARTH
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