

ETHICS IN ECOLOGICAL ART PRACTICES

AN EDITED VERSION OF A CONVERSATION AND DINNER THAT OCCURRED ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2008

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Present:

Erica Fielder, artist

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Megan Steinman, creative director and cultural editor

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Premise

After living in England and being immersed in the academic culture there, Collins and Goto returned to the San Francisco Bay Area for a conversation with trusted friends and colleagues in the ecological and environmental art community. We weren't able to gather everyone we hoped to, but those that made time agreed to help us think through ideas of ethics and distributed freedom in our shared area of practice. The conversation proved to be a lot of work for all of us, as we moved through our differences in knowledge, and experience.

Questions:

P. 2 How does art contribute to an ethical relationship to the natural environment?

P. 20 Has art moved from an ethical stance to an active emancipative role?

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Tim Collins: As you know, we were in Pittsburgh for ten years. A lot of the work was about planning and advocacy and in the new work we are starting to think about some of the same issues, but trying to address them through more poetic means. We're actually trying to instigate conversations rather than resolve conflicted situations...

I'm not going to tell you a lot about what we're doing now. I just want to get started talking. What we're interested in is the ongoing discussion about ethics and aesthetics. There are a number of literatures that are raising these issues and how to bring them back together in meaningful ways. We are all familiar with these issues from critical writing in recent art and ecology exhibition catalogues. Some of this is coming through new philosophies of environmental aesthetics and everyday aesthetics, which simply expand the context and the focal point of attention beyond the gallery and the obsession with an autonomous formal object.

So, there is a whole new set of questions that is emerging and there is a belief that we carry aesthetic sensibilities that shape and frame our day-to-day behaviour. There is an evolving—particularly in this new century—an evolving aesthetic perception that goes to questions of sustainability and goes to questions of health and wellbeing. It goes to questions of understanding our environment in new ways. How do you recognise an unhealthy environment from a healthy environment? I think most of us here can do that just through intuition alone and to be able to start to reflect upon that and qualify it or contextualize it in some is, is part of the role of academic inquiry.

The next element that I find interesting is this whole notion of emancipation. You know, if ethics and aesthetics go together, how do we start to emancipate those places and things that we really care about? How do we contribute to the emancipation of those things that have incredible value and import, but don't have a primary voice?

Newton Harrison: Are you using the term in the slavery sense?

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Tim Collins: Grant Kester, in [The Groundworks Catalogue](#), writes about the enlightenment and the emancipation of self from king and God, but the empowering of self occurred by the ownership of labour, land, and goods. Everything in the world that was not a white and male became property, which was the social and political infrastructure for one man's freedom. Through property, man had value in the eyes of the state, able to make a contribution to the direction of society.

So, one of the questions that comes through is, what happens when we think of nature and we start to understand that it has an agency onto itself? Are there degrees of freedom to consider?

Newton Harrison: We're talking about nature and its own right to exist?

Tim Collins: Yes, so it is basically about the conflict between utilitarian and intrinsic values. 'Does art contribute to an ethical relationship to the natural environment?' We all do that in slightly different ways, and we just wanted to hear how you're all going at those kinds of questions. I think we should speak from experience and interest.

Susan Steinman: So you actually are interested in what our individual anecdotal experiences are because my first question was, you know, this was a can of worms to begin with because, like, how do you define ethics? I mean, it is like John McCain and Obama both feel they are very ethical people, but they don't share the same ethics.

So, when you are talking about nature, or when you are even talking about doing artwork in nature, how do you define what someone's ethics are when they come to do this kind of work?

Reiko Goto: I think I would like to hear just your own views. Let's try to be specific rather than to generalise.

Susan Steinman: So I'll talk about what ethics mean to me?

Tricia Watts: So how does your art contribute?

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Reiko Goto: Yesterday, Anne Douglas, my director of study from Aberdeen in Scotland, and I went to Muir Woods. We got lost, but meanwhile we were wandering around and looking at the redwood groves. Erica and Susan, you might be surprised to hear how much I did not know about these trees. Then we thought about Serpentine Lattice. Why didn't Helen and Newton propose to plant trees? They were proposing to close the roads and traffic protecting places where severe clear-cutting had happened. Why did they suggest that? Then all of a sudden the question was answered. Less than 20% of the seeds germinate, the redwood can also sprout new trees from roots, the stump or even fallen branches; I understood what Serpentine Lattice was about. It is not just watershed issues but also how trees are living what they need to prosper and reproduce, it is about giving them the freedom to do that.

Newton Harrison: That Serpentine Lattice work of ours really requires an ensemble of people co-creating it. It is true that we can see it – you can see the shape; you can embrace the watersheds; you can synthesise the rich life in northern California to southern Alaska; you can call that up and you can call out for an eco-security system not unlike the social security system because you get into politics.

Helen Harrison: I think that there is something I want to say here. It is more to underline everything. That is, you have to begin with understanding that we are all part of a single system and that everything we do, and everything we believe, and everything we attempt and say, has to do with the whole system because everything we do affects the system and the system affects us. And because we do not start with that, we are often dooming ourselves to failure. I think that is much of life in the now.

Tricia Watts: I would just say that ethics come from knowing – the knowledge that we acquire and accumulate through our own work and through observing each other's work. I think in terms of empathy – these are traits that some people feel. I think some, (especially empathy) are genetic. So how much of this ethic have you implied in your intrinsic ...

Newton Harrison: Intrinsic value.

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Erica Fielder: I would like to stick to that. I make interpretive panels for parks and open spaces working to educate the general public about an eco-system or whatever when they're passing by as they walk on a trail, and I've been noticing that the National Parks System and State Parks and the National Association for Interpreters (which is our sort of industry membership organisation) are all putting a great emphasis on the very deeply personal experience of caring about nature. I know that the text I write is going to be received by people who do care and will care and have a feeling of kinship. When a memory gets triggered or there is a metaphor written into the text that reminds them of themselves somehow; when there is some personal reflection back in the art that I am making; when it touches in that way, something gets connected in a very profound way.

Helen Harrison: Unless it gets connected, our work will just be one more attempt to do something good. How we come to bring about that connection with people comes out of our own experience, and if we can talk from our own caring; from our concerns; from our own loving of the world and seeing it, it works. If we don't work from that, we will become one more speech about nature.

Susan Steinman: I was thinking about bio-diversity because I was thinking how different each person's work is in this room, and I think that that's really critical. I always say there is more than one road to Mecca. I think there is more than one way I always think of Helen and Newton's work as the macrocosm – you know, that they have such a fabulous poetic grasp of the big picture, and I feel that my work becomes a microcosm that is really like my work on Market Street [\[http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/urbanapple/index.html\]](http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/urbanapple/index.html) doing something is important to me. ...

Susan Steinman: Nuts and bolts – doing something hands-on. I just came back from Hamburg. I did this piece in a small neighbourhood where they have a conflict between the fact that it is seventy-eight percent Turkish immigrants, and then I got there..."Well, some of these Turkish immigrants have lived there for thirty years!

So this place it has all these relationships that overlap on ideas like naturalised plants

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versus invasive plants. It's easy to get caught up in the words and the definitions of difference... What I am just trying to say is that by doing something simple like making a garden in a public space where public land should be for people (and for public plants, for food plants) that people start simple conversation. Not only do they start the simple conversation with each other as people, they start the simple conversation with nature. You know, all of a sudden, planting a plant in soil and planting a seed and coming back two weeks later to see that it has sprouted – even though it is at, a train station; that seed sprouting is still like a miracle to me. It has the whole scientific basis, but still it has this like intuitive thing that you feel inside your body when it becomes experiential instead of philosophical.

Newton Harrison: You know when we first started, we took this decision, the consequences of which still amaze me, and we hadn't a clue. It was 1969 or '70 and we decided to do work that benefits eco-systems and the genetic code and the like – except, we had a little problem. We did not know what an eco system was! We only had the vaguest notion about what the genetic code was. We knew good from bad. To hurt it was bad, to help it was good – and it was just as simple as that for us beginners.

What we did, was a series of urban farms because we asked the question, "How are we going to eat? Where does our food come from?" We didn't know. I mean, yes, of course we knew theoretically, but we didn't know by doing, then. So we made earth. Then we made potato patches, and worm farms, and portable orchards, and all kinds of stuff to teach ourselves that. What we found was that the work we did, didn't hold enough information, it didn't encompass what was in our heads and our hearts.

So, we scaled up. From that, and looking at everybody else's work – I love the idea of diversity in the arts themselves *as* an act from looking at it from an eco-systemic point of view. It is what everybody does. It is not appropriate from my position to prioritise because, given how complexity works and complex systems work, you never can tell when, the smallest thing will have the largest consequence. You know, in our work it happens once in a while and it doesn't happen when we think it will.

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Tim Collins: Susan, what you're talking about is small interventions that are basically about human relationships and introducing human-nature relationships in places that didn't have them before. So I would argue that, while empathy may be genetic predisposition, the rest of what we know is socially constructed – do you agree?

So, if what you know as an urban person is all about asphalt and concrete, and all of a sudden you show up and introduce dirt into the equation –all of a sudden you have a new material context to rethink what you understand about nature. For me, that is material structure and new ethical relationship.

Tricia Watts: It has an aesthetic too.

Susan Steinman: It has an aesthetic because it is using art as a tool but what Tim is saying what I mean is, working in the city you realise, "How can people care about environmental issues or vote or support environmental issues if they can't see the stars?" I mean the most amazing thing that all of us experience because we have – whether you think of yourself as middle class or upper class – we have more mobility than ninety per cent of the people who live in urban settings, and the urban population is becoming denser and thicker. You know, there are these great books that examine megalopolises, and their back stories the favelas and shantytowns and that is the life that is happening in the world, we are throwing off the balance – the balance between people and their ecology of place. To save something, you have to know it exists.

Tricia Watts: So it is not so much that the megalopolis is a negative it is how you live in the megalopolis; how you stay connected to nature.

Erica Fielder: I found with my bird-feeder hat project

[\[http://www.birdfeederhat.org/\]](http://www.birdfeederhat.org/) – I spent six weekends with this project set up in various open spaces – one our local botanical gardens and one was our local art centre – and I had maps spread around on big frames that showed watersheds starting from my local watershed. My local –a total map of our local coastal area – expanding out to the entire world showing watersheds in teeny, tiny forms on these giant satellite photo maps.

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And then I had, as part of this, an opportunity for people to sit under these hats (I had six of them) that had been sitting out with birdfeed on them for some time (a couple of weeks) and birds were feeding off of them. You can actually put the hat on and experience the birds landing and kind of mumbling to themselves and pecking and you can hear them cracking open seeds and their little talons scratching away right on your head. And these papier-mâché hats with their big brims were like a drum so it was really amplified.

So there were two things happening. There are large development projects that may have a negative impact, threatening our local estuary and dune preserve.

[<http://rcwa.us/tenmile/index.html>]. This development and the quality of our local natural environment attracts people from all over the world – places like with big cities; and places like my little country area. There were people speaking languages

from everywhere coming through to check out the bird-feeder hat. We've done a lot of publicity around the United States about it. Most people who came by didn't know that they lived in a watershed until we were able to talk to them (whether through sign language and drawings or whatever). We video-taped these and the things that the people were able to draw out of themselves when we asked them specific questions – they knew so much more about their own home watershed.

The whole purpose of this was to introduce people to the fact that they lived in a watershed, even if it was a tiny little creek, and that these animals that landed on your head were members of *my* watershed. I asked them to think about their own watershed. What did they have in their own watershed that mattered to them?

And they began talking – whether they lived in the city or not – about the kinds of animals they'd seen; they began to understand that their watershed flowed into a gutter and down into the drain and off into the ocean and they may never see the water – but that little stream in their terrain was their ancient, historic watershed.

We were able to video some wonderful conversations with people as it suddenly dawned on them, "Oh, yes! I know people in my watershed! Oh, yes! I know these animals! Oh,

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I know some people who are actually working to protect my watershed!" And layer after layer, light after light, popped on because, I think, even people who live in these deeply layered megalopolises have some kind of sense (many, many, of them) – and maybe I'm just thinking of Western culture – but I think people have an innate understanding that they live... That somewhere, there is something like this, and as you peel away the urban layers those things that blind us, this becomes revealed.

Tricia Watts: So the ethic is creating either a dialogue or an experience – a social or aesthetic experience where the viewer connects with the ethic, if you will, about their relationship; their inter-dependency; their connection with nature.

Megan Steinman: The word that keeps on popping up for me is 'responsibility'. When you're working with ethics you are then bringing people face to face with their own responsibility for their actions, from here and now. Because you presented them with an idea about how to interact with the world and because they have that knowledge, they're then responsible for their actions as a result of an experience with this particular form of art. I think what is happening in the cities to people living in cities is that you have so many things that can relieve you of your responsibility of going with the environment that is around you because you have so many things that become automated that then you lose that connection and that responsibility for actually taking care of the space around you because it is taken care of for you.

Susan Steinman: Within responsibility there is emancipation. Some of us have a choice about how to live where you are and with whom and how we are living.

Helen Harrison: I think there is a very important thing here. If you look at children – children love animals; they love the dogs; they love the bunny rabbits; they love to go out in the grass here – they're connected, automatically almost, with nature. There isn't a big problem. They just go out and they're in it and appreciate it. We separate them from it. We separate them from nature, to be afraid of it; we only go here; we can't have a dog; we can't do this; we can't etc, etc....

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Newton Harrison: So, in fact, what your work does is rectify an error – a real error in education; an error in belief; and an error in how people conduct their lives.

Tricia Watts: Well, it replaces a loss. An error kind of sounds like someone consciously did something wrong. I think it is just a by-product of this disconnecting.

Susan Steinman: The interesting thing is that, as an artist (and I think all of us have this power; like when you come in as a guest artist in a community) obviously you have a different cache, all of a sudden, public space is available to work in, where for others living and working there, for some strange reason it wasn't available before? By working in that public space, you can actually create a different conversation. Conversations between the people who live there and the people who have the power over that little tiny patch of earth that actually could be changed in a positive way. It is like giving responsibilities – giving ownership back to people that care, that value that bit of land... A garden is actually – you can make it sound really easy, but it is actually a lot of work. You do take on the responsibility for it. *[Chuckles.]* And all of a sudden it changes your relationship to a place you think you knew your entire life.

Tim Collins: So is this ethical question – is it more likely to occur at a small scale in one-to-one human relationships than on a larger scale? And is it different in the outdoor public space versus the gallery space?

Newton Harrison: I would like to talk about a work we did that, to our astonishment, evoked environmental love from a whole bureaucracy – towns, cities and stuff like that. We were invited to help a nature reserve come into being on the Sava river, (in the former Yugoslavia) [http://theharrisonstudio.net/sava_river.html]. And so we show up there and meet with the very wise folk and learn the nature reserve not only has come into being, but they don't need us.

Helen Harrison: They had the most marvellous floodplain in almost all of Western Europe. One of two or three most marvellous floodplains.

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Newton Harrison: So there were we. We didn't help anybody. We walked into a new teacher – that's what we did. So, not to waste our time, we made a proposal to restore the Sava River – the whole system – to a nature corridor because the width of the Sava was wide enough and the dams earthen enough to accept an eco-system that could run 500 miles.

Helen Harrison: There was also the problem of intensive industrial farming done on most of the floodplain, which, in toto, was about 5,000 square kilometers. And all the waste from the farms etcetera came into the river, which had been pure until then. The point was, they were planning the Nature Reserve as a cure for the area, so began a cure for the river.

Newton Harrison: Helen, the point I want to make is something about environmental love. What happened was, we photographed the river from its beginnings to its outfall in the Danube up and down. We made our proposal; we made an exhibition. It was in Ljubljana and then it moved down to The Museum of the Revolution in Zagreb with Helen and me doing poetry at a podium. People came up to the work and said they knew every photograph we took. Then we lectured to their bureaucracy (like three hundred men and ten women) with Helen and me doing poetry up there. We showed them pictures of the Sava and pictures of the LA River and we said, "You know what, what you have here, is an original river and you have troubles here and there but you could address the troubles. Or, if you really want to do nothing – just don't let your troubles get worse!" And then they were so happy about it, that they accepted our proposal.

Well then – the Water Department of Croatia accepted it, then our assistant, a biologist was just getting his PhD, figures out that it as easy to do a drain-basin as it is to study ten acres of the sea eagles' habitat. So he goes after the next river – the Drava River over ...

Helen Harrison: The sister river, almost.

Newton Harrison: And he gets four countries to agree to make the Drava River a nature reserve. Well, there is an outcome from this. The outcome is the Sava and the Drava gives the Lower Danube fifty percent of its clean water.

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Helen Harrison: More than fifty percent.

Newton Harrison: This has a salutary effect and flushes the estuary and the Black Sea which is very polluted.

Well, the point here is that... There are unintended consequences, and part of the construction of an ecological narrative that may evoke love and pleasure and fun and – God, the Head of the Water Department came over to me and Helen and said, "What can we do for you?" and we said, "We would like to do a swamp purification system. Nobody has ever let us do that before." He was so happy. He said, "Go to the nature reserve. Choose two swamps!"

The point is that sometimes a work can evoke joy – pure joy – and every once in a while one of our works does it, and that becomes our measure and then we can go through our works and learn from works that didn't do i

Tricia Watts: So not many jobs or occupations evoke this kind of joy. So artists have that liberty, and therefore can create or extend that freedom to others.

Newton Harrison: Yes, what I'm coming to is that all of us as artists, we find a comfort level at the scale we work. At the Sava we understood that comfort level. It wasn't the small farms. The small farms were our teachers and we got our hands dirty – we made earth and we did all that stuff. It was sort of like our version of learning to draw. So we did all these smaller works that got us towards our sense of scale.

And what I am seeing in everybody's work is the authenticity comes when you know your sense of scale; when you know how big your here is – and then the authority comes.

And that is what I like about this sort of movement that is happening.

Susan Steinman: Well, I actually like to equate it to niches. I love that book about Darwin's finches. You know, that the finches learned to divide up the whole hillside so that everyone didn't starve – they developed different beaks so that they can survive in different parts of the hillside depending on whether the ecology was desert or rainforest. Anyway – Darwin studied them because they had such a short lifespan that their

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biological diversity showed up really quickly in several generations. There was something like fifty or sixty different kinds of beaks on these birds and it was by developing the niche that you can do your best work – you know, altogether you make a larger ecology.

Newton Harrison: And, what it really has to do with – I actually think it has to do with empathy (as you say), but I also think it has to do with something at the other end of that spectrum which is survival. I feel like, if I'm not working at my scale, my survival is at stake. Do you know what I mean? I don't feel good. Everybody I know who does the work they do – when they hit their scale, they feel good, and I think that feedback is really important. It is important to feel good about what you do.

Reiko Goto: Going back to your scale issue, The Serpentine Lattice is understood by people who live in the West Coast. Peninsula Europe is better understood by people who live there. They are more familiar with the issues.

Newton Harrison: Our work really is local. It is just a big local.

Reiko Goto: Can we go beyond that scale of the West Coast or Europe?

Newton Harrison: Do you want to?

Susan Steinman: Yes – I think we need to, but not in a monolithic way. Ethics in this country... I mean, our country does have a problem because we are so large and we are so diverse and trying to treat the country as a monolithic thing, just doesn't work. It does work, if we begin watershed by watershed; niche by ecological niche. That seems to work.

Newton Harrison: I noticed that lots of folks (in our group too) is they invent a niche. The niche didn't pre-exist them. That is the core creativity.

Susan Steinman: Well, that's what the finches do. Well, that's survival.

Erica Fielder: And bees as well ...

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Tim Collins: Scale is important, we are at a point in world evolution where there is one species that has affected air, water, soil, the fat on our flesh, global climate – you know, and no other species has had that kind of impact or the scope and scale of responsibility for generations of negative impact.

Susan Steinman: Talking about bio-diversity, and scale in an artist's work. There was this incredible series of aerial photographic essays about the growth of unplanned cities because people are thrown away from their world by war, by drought, by whatever reason they're driven to the cities and they become these shack cities with no sanitation, no nothing, and – anyways ...I have a very negative view of human beings at this point. Like nature we will survive, but I don't think our society will

Tim Collins: By 2025 fifty per cent of the earth's population is going to be living in cities and it's not wars – it is economics. Economics, land-use, politics and policy have driven people off the land and into cities for over 150 years.

Newton Harrison: That is absolutely true.

Tricia Watts: And maybe it's nature's way. Maybe that's what we have to do to survive. Have you ever thought about it that way? Maybe this is just what is happening naturally.

I worked on a museum project on the creative process where we brought in creative theorists from all over the world including Howard Gardner, the author of Multiple Intelligences, and other creativity theorists. I thought a lot about what creativity is. When I researched the art and nature movement, what I found is that nature is creativity and that we, as humans, imitate nature in our efforts to survive and that survival is problem-solving – it is a set of problem-solving skills that mimics nature. And that is our creativity. Most of our inventions, our solutions to most problems, come from observing and learning from nature itself.

Newton Harrison: Yes, what Tim is saying, and I think what you are saying, and what I often say, is that continuous creativity by people, especially as we coalesce in cities, can overwhelm the whole damn environment and nothing is left untouched.

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Susan Steinman: I take back what I said earlier. Actually, I'm more hopeful, recently, I actually do believe in youth and like Jo Hanson of this programme – the artist in residency programme that she started at San Francisco Recycling.

[<http://sunsetscavenger.com/AIR/>] – her whole idea was that schoolchildren would be brought through this programme and that more than two or three thousand schoolchildren come and they get a whole tour of the dump, and they see how much trash is thrown away every day and then they see artists working there so that they learn this idea of either transformation or not, like not putting that trash there to begin with.

I actually saw a greatly different world then. (Even though it was just 1990.) I sort of give up on adults, and I do think that the place to concentrate is... I think that children want to know.

Newton Harrison: There is a property that all of us have as artists that others don't (not often – anyway). And that is two things: one is – the most important – we all set our own agendas. In a control-dominated world, in an agenda-dominated world, even in a world that has endless ideologies – and I'm afraid of some art ideologies. What is more and more important now is that we, as artists, not only do the helping we do as best we can. We know that it is never enough, but we understand our work as exemplars of something; and we ourselves are exemplars of, what I would call ... Hah! Let's just say we are more self-organising than most.

Reiko Goto: Can I just talk about my own work (and practice) for a moment? I want to respond to Susan on a couple of things. One was “we are a part of the ecological system” – there are no divisions. And the second one is our own ethical practice.

Last year I worked with Suzanne Lacy and Anne Douglas to organize three workshops in relation to socially engaged art practice in Scotland.

[<http://www.workinginpublicseminars.org/>] Anne was the director of the project. We worked with twelve artists. (We also invited theorists.) We had three seminars. At the end of the programme Susanne suggested we go to Scottish Parliament to present our work.

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There was a huge discussion about what we were going to present to Parliament. It was very difficult. The conclusion was that each of us had to decide what we would tell at Parliament. It was not we as a whole. Everyone has his or her own way to tell a story. We only had ten minutes each. We divided into three groups, and it worked. There were some members of The Scottish Parliament in the audience. They said they never realised artists work like this.

Going back to Susan's point that we are part of the ecological system. Socially-based art practice often misses key ecological issues. Because we are part of the ecological system, socially-engaged art practice must include ecological issues and practice.

Megan Steinman: Are we taking ourselves out of the equation?

Reiko Goto: I think socially-engaged artists are interested in ethical issues, but they often forget about environmental and ecological issues. My role when I was there (working with the socially-engaged artists) was trying to highlight the environmental and ecological context. We cannot separate the social from the ecological, there are issues and relationships by looking at the human and its social relationships alone, we forget about our atmosphere and the air we breathe.

Susan could you explain a little bit – catching us up on what you have been doing. Erica started talking about her bird-hat project. Something like that, then we can all relax and engage with you easily.

Susan Steinman: Ok, I was invited by a very interesting group of curators to come to Hamburg for three weeks and asked if I could do a project in three weeks – hitting the ground running. There were lots of issues, – never having been to the city before; not speaking German; and also with my own serious health problems – not knowing if I had the ability to work non-stop for three weeks. But I accepted, it was exciting.

And when I got there, it was like I dived into heaven because there was an interest amongst the people for this kind of work ... I was not dropped into a void. I was dropped

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into a living Petri dish. There were people who were already doing good work, who wanted more good work and wanted something that was part of a larger programme.

So, certain things were already set in motion and some things were so terrific there already, I couldn't believe they (and Newton said this as well) – I could not believe they saw it as a problem. This neighbourhood is across the river from downtown Hamburg.

Susan Steinman: Wilhelmsburg in its relationship to Hamburg is a lot like Brooklyn to New York. It is across the river and the problems are still international. It is the same problems when I worked in West Oakland (across the bay from San Francisco). One of the reasons they invited me was because they had seen on my website that I did this Gardens to Go project in West Oakland.

[\[http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/gardenstogo/index.html\]](http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/gardenstogo/index.html)

They took me to visit all the different kinds of gardens that are there. That is what we did for one whole week. All I did for one week was meet people and talk to people and see all the different garden structures that are there – and from having worked in Germany – you know they have the 'Kleine Gärten'. Everyone has a garden; it is about like half the size of this room with a building on it and a fence. All along the railroad track. And then, some of them are a little bit more hidden, some are on polluted land, and they are always in danger of losing it, so they don't really want you to come and visit them because they're afraid they're going to lose it. And then some people have a life-long lease on their piece of land.

The immigrant population has grown; they come from a more rural place. They are able to take good advantage of the German Kleine Garten program and more than 50% of these gardens are either older Germans (not younger Germans), or immigrants. So all of a sudden this thing which is like a piece of national pride is changing its flavour, and they can't tell whether they are alarmed or not.

One group of people named themselves The International Cultural Garden and they were really interesting. They took this piece of land (that they might be kicked off any day) and their garden was very amorphous. It didn't have borders; it didn't have fences around

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it – it just was like, everyone could come in and they could share a plot together and the shapes were like all organic and weird – they weren't like this box thing.

So, I had a dinner party, and I invited everybody to come from all these different gardens and to bring their food from the gardens and I just called it 'kitchen-table diplomacy' and I got a table, and I painted it green, and everybody came and brought their food and we sat around the table and we talked, and everybody became friends and they talked about ... I don't know what they talked about! It was in German. *[Laughter.]* We had a great party. And the rest of the opening was all happening all around it, but I had the best corner. You know, everybody wanted to come to this corner because the food there was really good. [<http://www.steinmanstudio.com/gardenforall/index.html>]

So I got those same people to come to the train station where I had done a temporary garden using all plastic boxes (not very pc – or ecological), but all there is there is home depot-type stores with plastic boxes. So I did a garden in plastic boxes. And then I invited everybody in that immigrant neighbourhood to come to a free planting workshop the next Tuesday and I got all those people from those gardens to come and work in the garden with the other people and I got the people at the train station to give me a permit so that we could use all these raised beds there that had been waist-high with weeds. And because I was the guest artist from America, and not a local person there asking to use the land, the authorities came in and had it totally cleared of weeds so that, when we came in, all we had to do was clean up the little broken alcohol bottles and things, and we had this land to plant on, and we planted a real garden there. It was a really bad time of the year to plant. How can you plant in August? I planted a winter vegetable garden. The plants I spoke of were thorn-less blackberries and strawberries.

And the people from the intercultural gardens – they took the names and the phone numbers. And the Turkish women came by with their kids, and other people stopped with their kids; and everyone was planting and it was like Tom Sawyer and his friends. Everyone was planting together.

So, the idea is, the Intercultural Garden liked this action so much that they're going to do

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it once a month and they're going to adopt this garden and the people in the neighbourhood are going to work with them.

I forgot to say that the Intercultural Garden's problem was that they couldn't get people to come to *their* garden. And I said, "Well, you can't get people to come to your garden. You have to go to where the people are because everything is one-to-one. So, and then, everybody who was around there in the small shops and workspace thought that this is going to be destroyed in 24 hours because there are hoodlums here; there are delinquents; and there are drunk people out of work sitting around. And instead, the drunken people out of work helped us – even if they were drunk, they helped us. I was there three weeks, I did something, and I called it an 'action' – a political action. Then I said, "It's yours. I'm going back home." And I walked away, and months later they told me everything is still there and the kids' plants are growing.

Tricia Watts: Well, that's a common response for public officials, for people who work for the city that are very concerned about their liabilities. So, when community projects put stuff in the public sphere that is not within their normal daily routine, then they get all nervous. Inevitably they'll say, "That's not going to work." And inevitably, it does work.

I think the last project I probably told you about Hybrid Fields

[\[http://hybridfields.blogspot.com/\]](http://hybridfields.blogspot.com/)– working with Susan on her Urban Apple Orchard 2 (it's still there, it is now going to be moved). Oh, they thought for sure [*it will be vandalised*], because it had doors with glass in it; five doors in a pentagram formation and everybody was sure that those glass panels would be knocked out; the hoodlums would come by – but, you know, the Director, the Board, were all very concerned that these things would be broken and thought we're just asking for trouble – and it's been there for two years and nothing has happened.

It was the aesthetic state too. It wasn't just random. It looked planned. I sometimes think that some of the more vulnerable works can have a longer life if it is not political. You know, if it is going to evoke a kind of anger in a public, I think it can be turned down very

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quickly even if it is an ephemeral work, but I think for pieces that are very thoughtful and have that kind of vulnerability, I think sometimes they can last longer because I think people do want to protect them and take care of things as long as it is done in a way that is not provocative.

FROM ETHICS TO THE EMANCIPATION IN ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ART

Tim Collins: We're working through the questions. The first question had to do with ethical relationships, and the second has to do with how we are moving from an ethical stance towards an emancipative role.

Tricia Watts: So, the artist is not as integral to this activity – is that what you're saying?

Newton Harrison: I have a hell of a job regarding myself as an emancipator. It just does not 'work for me.

Tim Collins: The way I get at this is by thinking about making small contributions to the emancipation of places and things, providing windows of opportunity where new ideas and living things can flourish and thrive. There is the ethical stance followed by emancipation is a kind of ethics in action.

Newton Harrison: How about making small contributions to well-being?

Helen Harrison: I wanted to say that [as artists] we do not go into a place saying, "Now what can we do for you?" We go into a place and say, "What is it telling me?"

Susan Steinman: "How can I be here?"

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Helen Harrison: "What am I hearing from it? What am I seeing or feeling about this place?" And then, "Do I have a response to it? Is there something I think that may be valuable?"

Megan Steinman: I think artists learn to look at something and see it in a different way. You also learn from experience and hearing things, and certainly are more attuned to it.

Newton Harrison: You have to learn to heal. You have to learn to let yourself be modified.

Helen Harrison: You have to learn to listen, and that is, I think, one of the big problems, is that we are so full of what we have to say, that we forget to listen.

Tricia Watts: Returning to this question— I'm really having trouble with it. I guess I don't see how to answer it. "Has art moved from an ethical stance to an active emancipative role?"

Susan Steinman: In a word, I would say no it has not.

Erica Fielder: I think for me, that question could be answered by saying, "Well, its piece-by-piece and person-by-person. I think all I can say is with my experiences with people engaging with my interpretive panels or the bird-feeder hat or the returning of the bones or any of the projects – some people are just wildly moved and touched and changed, and others aren't – and a community forms in that way or it doesn't. It may be chemistry or timing or just the right drop of education and poetry and visionary qualities to the piece.

Tim Collins: I see nature (in the eco-feminist tradition) in its current condition to be similar to historic issues with women – it's an entity that has no political rights (at this time); it is an entity that has a life force; it has the limited agency, but no more limited than corporations or people that are comatose, both are entities that are afforded political rights, (even ships have legal standing) through advocacy. Rights are granted to things that have fundamental value in our society.

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So, if we think about evolution, I would suggest that our culture has an evolving we sense of ethics. We all have an understanding of natural systems – you described them as part of your larger understanding of yourself. So your life force permeates things that are beyond that envelope, that bag of skin that is you, yes? I would argue that all of our ethical stances are shifting in important ways, particularly in this practice.

And the question is, *are* we moving? Or are there instances where we know of colleagues that have moved toward emancipation as an element of their practice, which is exemplary? Are we sensing those potentials?

Tricia Watts: Can you give me an example?

Susan Steinman: That would be Lynne Hull, where she takes the part of birds or monkeys or something instead of humans. Is that what you mean? I think she has incredible empathy with the animals themselves, and she sees “them” as her art client, if you want to look at it like that.

Helen Harrison: She has done that all the way through hasn't she?

Susan Steinman: I think she is the simplest model for me to try to understand the language you are using.

Newton Harrison: May I say something about what I would call "the metaphorical state?" The word that is avoided all the time is 'love'. 'Love' is a metaphorical state. It is when you are the other, but not completely the other.

Helen Harrison: Therefore you experience and feel and understand for the other even though you can't physically be the other.

Tricia Watts: I understand 'love' as 'knowing'. And that's what [Sam Keen] presents with his books on love. We cannot love what we do not know. You can't impart any kind of ethic without having that knowledge, so it is that knowing. The knowledge of a place. It is when we understand the system that you become part of a watershed, a community or a family for that matter.

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Susan Steinman: Also, it comes from feminists – Eco-feminist philosophy. Seeing woman as nature, nature as chattel, women are chattel, people as other, are chattel. And so, emancipation in that sense, I can come to it through my work in that sense. You have that empathy (which is in itself the beginning of an emancipated role) as being property, as being chattel.

Helen Harrison: I would tell you a story. When we first came to the University of California, San Diego when the great German philosopher Herbert Marcuse was teaching, he was always talking about emancipating – about the classes and the lower classes and emancipating them. Marcuse attacked our work, saying that Environmentalism, like Feminism, was a form of avoiding the real problem, which was the class struggle. Newton became angry, saying that the whole ecosystem was the underclass and the whole culture behaved as the uber-class.

Newton Harrison: That was almost 35 years ago. I do believe that some of the stuff that we're *not* talking about is really disturbing me – and it is passion and it is a deep response to things and it is love – and I don't see why we are talking about emancipation. I really don't care. It doesn't do anything for me.

Reiko Goto: Tim, why emancipation?

Tim Collins: Yes, well... The question is – the world is full of people that respond and depict the condition of the world with certain objectivity – yes? And we can claim ...no, I would argue that one insight that comes out of this practice emerges through familiarity, through intimate relationships with beings other than humanity – yes? So we have these relationships and through those relationships, it teaches us things and on a certain level it brings us to a series of ethical positions and questions that start to permeate our lives. So the next evolution of an ethical stance is to actually turn it into a practical activity in some ways isn't it?

Newton Harrison: I want to put aside the term “emancipate”, I don't like the word. But, putting the word aside, I think that several things happen that you get into. Are you using the word "emancipation" to free you up from art-world polemic?

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Now, I know that since there were no pre-existing models, most of us had to begin at some time to teach ourselves how to do it. Look at all the work we do [heads nod.] Of course, everybody in this room taught themselves how, so we are self-taught. What does that tell us? Our education system wasn't too good.

Let's continue the argument. The argument is, are there enough of us around? Have we done enough for some kind of common structure to emerge? That this common structure which Tim is suggesting might be an infrastructure, then can help us, collectively, move along in more powerful ways than we can proceed individually. However, I prefer a less loaded word than "emancipation."

Susan Steinman: Well, yes, by learning from each other.

Erica Fielder: What does an emancipated ecological artist look like?

Tim Collins: For me it is not about an emancipated ecological artist. We are as emancipated as we're going to get. It is about emancipating nature itself. So, when I look back at the work we're doing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the question was, "Could we reveal ideas and experience that would inform a renewed sense of value, that might support advocacy to forests, riparian systems and rivers?"

In our work with trees in cities, that's one of the things that we're struggling with but just as surely as you're all struggling with why we are asking these questions, Reiko and I are struggling with what these questions mean for ourselves which is why we decided to assemble some people we trust to and respect to talk with us.

Tricia Watts: And so, looking back at your projects on the Monongahela River, do you see through all the work that you two did, and all the other people that got involved with you – do you see that there was an emancipation of nature?

Reiko Goto: Yes. In the former project, Nine Mile Run, the stream was going to be buried. It had no social or ecological value. People did not understand what they had. They were going to cover the stream in a culvert. Because of our work, they did not bury the stream in a culvert. People recognized the value of an urban stream even though

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the water was still polluted. They recognized it is life and it supports life. That is a small emancipation, that stream went on to live another day. Erica I think you are the person who understands emancipation for all living things.

Tricia Watts: But nature cannot be emancipated. That's a language that we, as humans, have. Because that's a word that we're projecting – anthropomorphising unto nature here in this situation.

Susan Steinman: We are nature, seeing nature, with a concept of nature, and that concept of nature really gets in our way.

Tim Collins: Ok, so, in 1974 there was a court case brought for a grove of Redwoods – I can think of an attorney (in California) Christopher Stone [<http://lawweb.usc.edu/who/faculty/directory/contactInfo.cfm?detailID=372>] he brought a case against Disney Corporation who was doing a huge development. He wrote a book about it, *Should Trees Have Standing?--Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*. Basically he decided to advocate for the rights of trees. It went all the way to the Supreme Court and the dissenting opinion was by a really famous jurist, William O. Douglas. Paraphrasing, he said, "This is a very important question at this point in time." (About 1974.) If we can advocate for corporations who have no voice, if we can advocate for children that do not as yet have voice, if we can advocate for the mentally infirm, the comatose and all of these beings that have no voice because they have value to us in our culture, then why can we not consider these things of nature that have value to us?

Reiko Goto: Well, can I say ...I wanted to emancipate the Nine Mile Run stream and aquatic creatures from sewage pollution. It became a research and stream restoration. It was an action and engagement with natural environment. People who were involved in the restoration, they found new freedoms of creative expression and advocacy, by being involved in the restoration.

Megan Steinman: It means that you were not free at one point.

Tim Collins: Or it means that your freedom has been constrained.

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Newton Harrison: I think this is true ...

Susan Steinman: It is a human action, an-applied concept.

Newton Harrison: There was another term that was popular among ecologists, and it is the one that I like a lot. It is called 'intrinsic value'. Let me talk about it for a minute because it is almost parallel to what Tim is trying to talk about with 'emancipation,' which I am trying to understand. I don't like it so much, but I at least I'm starting to understand it somewhat.

The whole eco-movement up until 1980 (and we were part of all that discussion with [Mike Soule] and many others who started working in the '70s, picking it up from people in '30s – it is not as though the ideas are new. What had helped is that we generally understood that we must preserve what we call natural systems in nature because they have intrinsic value. They are valuable because they are valuable unto themselves. In that sense that is why we also preserve human beings. Human beings have intrinsic value – that is to say, you didn't have to justify it. They were past justification and that is how nature was seen and that is what we all understood it to be.

Now, something happened, and the intrinsic value beliefs [that permeate me and Helen and many others] stopped. I think there may be a need for new language. There is certainly a need for new language, and although I have a distaste for the word 'emancipation', it may become part of this new language.

Tim Collins: We've been spending six months working really closely with trees every day just following their phenomenological response to atmospheric chemistry. It is interesting – Our idea of 'agency' is changing. You know, we always consider ourselves ...

Newton Harrison: What is an agency?

Tim Collins: A sense of an ability to shape the world in some meaningful way.

Newton Harrison: Ok. Power to enact.

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Tim Collins: Power to act to act in your own interest. Now, obviously, trees have no brain. Their interest is maybe better described as their life force, the need to thrive and procreate.

Tricia Watts: *Their* life forces? It's like they are people, I'd rather call them trees. It just sounds grandiose.

Erica Fielder: Why don't you guide us into where you want to go, just go where you want to go Tim.

Tim Collins: So the questions of agency – and the question is, is it only humans that have agency, or are there other living beings and entities that have agency? We know that animals and mammals have agency. We know that insects have some sense of agency. The idea that trees have agency is an evolving sensibility.

We were hiking in the woods the other day, and it was interesting – we were in a deep forest canopy and all of a sudden we just see this tree, and it is at a complete ninety-degree angle. It somehow came up, realised there wasn't enough sun and drove over like fifteen, twenty feet to search out the sun moving out from under another much more mature tree – which is a pretty interesting action/reaction. It is self-interest; it is in the interest of the life force.

Erica Fielder: I'm going to give another very good example. Water can only be pumped a certain height with our level of gravity (and I don't have the math for that – but you all probably know that). Redwood trees grow way beyond that height and nobody, until recently, has figured out how they get their water up there.

Well, this guy, Stephen Sillet a professor at Humboldt University [<http://www.humboldt.edu/redwoods/sillett/>] he has been teaching his students to climb trees – technically. He is the first person who has been doing these high grid canopy studies and he has found in the notches of these giant limbs that you find only at the very tops of these trees, cavities that are a yard square filled with soil that has grown from droppings and dead things over eons and the tree puts roots out into that! It

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has a high-canopy root system. Drip keeps those pockets moist enough to feed the top part of the canopies. It doesn't have to get it all the way up there. It collects it from the stratosphere practically.

Newton Harrison: Oh how lovely!

Erica Fielder: Isn't that amazing! I want you to know this because, to me, when you say, "How do you know plants or trees have agency" – it is in their eons of evolution. It is a slow agency that all living and, what we might call non-living things, have through evolution. I can tell you a million things about these high canopy trees.

For example, they found a tiny little microscopic shrimp-like creature. It is only found in puddles and ponds on the forest floor. Three hundred feet up in these little pockets there are some of which carry little tiny lakes that are about this big. It stays wet because there is something dripping onto them all the time.

Newton Harrison: People know about the Santiago Theory. (Although a useful aid to thought, his theory is not regarded as proven science.) (See [\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santiago_theory_of_cognition\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santiago_theory_of_cognition)).

Erica Fielder: Yes, I wouldn't refute any of that. All I want to say when I pointed out about the high-canopy root systems is, the more we learn about the incredible intricacies of ecology and relationships, the more we can see that there is agency.

For example, I don't think one redwood tree has as much agency as the entire ecosystem on which it lives. I think ecosystems, like hives of bees, are the brains and that the individuals live and die, but this entire ecosystem with the mycelia connecting up to the root tips of the trees (because the trees can't dissolve certain nutrients, but the mycelia can and vice versa) – I mean, there is agency there. There is changing one chemical component on the earth to another so that it can be sucked up and utilised and photosynthesised and spat out as fruit ... I mean, the world is full of agencies.

Newton Harrison: What we're saying is that the life systems that have evolved over billions of years have value because they are what they are. Yes, they nourish us – but

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even if they didn't nourish us, they would have value because they are what they are. And the question (once you get past the language) is, with the whole damn world devaluing them, how do we re-value them?

Tim Collins: It's interesting, because it is language. Like you said the mycelia in the eco-system below the earth you call it a brain. Now for me that is going too far because for me a brain is up here ...

Erica Fielder: This is just maths—it's not a brain or the brain...

Tim Collins: I'm really clear in my own thinking that plants and other living materials don't have lungs, they don't have hearts, they don't have brains – but they do have agency. They have self-interest and I do consider them to be 'they' and whether I call them 'they' rather than 'it' is a political decision. I see them as living entities that are as deserving of my respect as those ubiquitous living things we call us.

So, although I don't agree with your language, I agree with the general intent of what you've described and I can see a responsive decision-making structure of some sort that is biological. I don't understand it. I don't pretend to understand it.

Newton Harrison: Can I suggest the thing that proves your point absolutely? Let me go back to the Santiago Theory. In the '60s, there was a Chilean team from the University at Santiago whose names were Maturana and Varela. Varela lived on to be the famous one. They put forward what was called the Santiago Theory.

They posed this very simple question, "How do you know life is life?" You know the story. Well, what they came up with was that life—like every cell is alive—and it had intelligence. How did you know a cell has intelligence? Well, you knew it because a cell did what was good for it and didn't do what was bad for it.

Helen Harrison: It took in what was good for and did not take in what was bad, simple a simple but valid intelligent act.

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Newton Harrison: So it made decisions. One of the ways you know that life is life, *is* that it makes these decisions and, in that sense, it does have what you call an agency. Now, and thus all living things – whether they are complex or down to the cell (although not a brain as we understand it) they have agency.

What they argued was that all living things are basically dissipative structures. (A dissipative structure takes energy into itself, uses it and spits out what is not useful.) This process they called a pattern of organisation. When a pattern of organisation becomes disorganised, that is a way of saying it is dying. In dying, it stops taking things in and pushing things out.

So, all nature builds from this, and it builds from the bacteria formed over these billions of years and, hence, from my position, it has intrinsic value.

Tricia Watts: I would like to go back to what Susan said—one of her first comments was about ethics. You know, McCain and Obama both are ethical people, but their ethics are very different.

Susan Steinman: What I was going to say is, then why is it that... You explained it when you said it was like intelligence. Because I think that it is. It is intelligence.

But - what happens when it gets to humans who actually make decisions that are counter-intuitive to their survival? Does it just not happen when it gets to humans?

Newton Harrison: I want to answer your question. The Santiago Theory continues a little bit and it poses the very same question. Well ok – how can you have intelligence without a central nervous system? And that's what they set out to prove. And that everything alive today is intelligent because it acts in its own interest. And your root system up at the top is a stunning version of how that comes by.

So what about people? What is the difference between the simple cell and people? Back then, the Chilean team-argued that consciousness requires a brain. A shift in evolution where, at a certain moment, the complexity of cells clustering, grouping—grouping and clustering in such a way that their advantage produces an intelligence like the brain

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and at a certain moment the brain gets complex enough and consciousness is an outcome. This is not well-enough said, but I hope the idea is clear.

Tim Collins: Let me try to refocus a bit. Are there place-specific entities that are really deserving of our long-term ethical interest, emancipative intent, and ultimately, potentially, political rights so that they can sustain themselves through generations in the future.

Megan Steinman: We keep saying that semantics is an issue. I think it is actually one of the things that define what happens. We have language to disseminate information and the language gets us into trouble because that tree that you're saying has an agency to go ninety degree and then find sun somewhere else—that's not a conscious decision that it is making. It is just doing it because that's the information that it has and that's just the tree, and about ...

Susan Steinman: Go for the sunlight.

Megan Steinman: Yes. Go into the sunlight. I've got to grow. I've got to take in what's good. Sun's good; take it in; I've got to grow; where that is versus what happens when a human is in trouble or our ethics are skewed

Humans take our intelligence or consciousness and we form an agency and we talk about it and we bring in all the experts and we bring in all the information, and then actually that gets muddled and then we aren't making the best decisions. Whereas, if you actually take agency out of the equation and you do just make decisions based on what is good for you at that very moment, you probably might find nine times out of ten that you are liberating yourself or emancipating yourself and taking yourself out of this contractual obligation.

Tricia Watts: Liberating—I think I like that word better.

Newton Harrison: Everybody accepts that the idea that nature had intrinsic value. You only had to do something serious to protect it and we were arguing whether you needed to set aside ten per cent, fifteen per cent or twenty per cent of the land in all kinds of

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different configurations to let diversity evolve and just to get the hell out of the way but with another caveat. In places where we had done too much damage, what we needed to do then was to assist the migration of species. Unimpeded by human activities, species migrate all the time in response to changed conditions of every kind imaginable.

Susan Steinman: Yes, because that's really a problem – like, over the last thirty years, Army (my husband) and I – our pleasure was always to go on a camping trip in one of our national parks and if you travel the same kind of route through the western and south west – just in thirty years you see that the national parks become a smaller and smaller, isolated, islands, remnant pieces of land. Where, before, there used to be like wildlife borders, they don't exist anymore. And so you protect this little tiny piece of land. If you don't protect corridors, then that isolated piece of land will [go] too.

Newton Harrison: All true. The studies all show that if you set up an island eco-system, it shrinks at the edges.

Tricia Watts: We're well beyond the emancipation of the trees.

Susan Steinman: There is a part of the national parks, the rivers – believe it or not – of the Department of the Interior that is a little bit more forward thinking. In 2001 Jackie Brookner and I were National Park Service 'Artists in Residence' for this programme that was called 'The Rivers and Trails' and their thing was just about that.

[\[http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/natlparksvce/index.html\]](http://www.steinmanstudio.com/publicart/natlparksvce/index.html) It was about the wildlife corridors and all these waterways – because the waterways are the wildlife borders – but to make them multi-purpose so that the water corridors become like national parks and that you have a buffer zone along these waterways that are like hiking trails and that, if there can't be a hiking trail, then you can make it into a kayak trail. By giving humans some kind of access to it, then they want to protect it. And they also make like a green economy in small communities.

Newton Harrison: All of this is in order to make places that should have intrinsic value, have economic value as well to protect the intrinsic value. And the intrinsic value almost always loses out in the long-term.

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Susan Steinman: You see, I think one of the ways to go about all of this – and it is interesting what you've just said a couple of hair-breaths back – you said that often when you try to tie an economic value to nature, that nature loses. I actually think it is really important to tie an economic value to nature. The more precious we make nature, and the more we see that it has real value – we live in a capitalist world. I mean, I don't know how you get past it. It's just part of who we are at this time.

Helen Harrison: I believe it represents a profound flaw in our consciousness, in our awareness of the world, and the nature of reality. It represents that everything has to have a commercial value. It represents the fact that we don't know [buckets] about this planet we live on.

Susan Steinman: I guess I was thinking about it in different ways because I see a lot of places – especially in small dying towns where the economy is dying – I actually think that a green ecology – a green economic system helps the town survive and then these towns become caretakers of what they have around them so that it becomes a win-win situation. Nature is not money, people are not money. It's like – how do you work in the system – how do you make that system work for you, instead of working always against it, which feels like tilting at windmills?

Helen Harrison: You can get it done – and my feeling is so strong. I don't get a chance really to say it, but we have to begin with the children. And I mean with the youngest children, that they are used to plants and animals and that that becomes part of their life.

Erica Fielder: Yes, we don't teach them about the horrors of what is going on the planet; we don't teach them about global warming; and we don't teach them about any of that heavy, heavy, heavy stuff that we have brought on this planet. They will find their way, but I have seen young people so depressed, and so sunk about the planet because, along with learning about the butterflies, they learn it is an endangered species and we have to take care of it and oh, my God, and they lose their awe, and they also have to say to keep our mouths shut about all the terrible things going on.

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Ethics in Ecological Art Practices

Helen Harrison: I would be inclined to agree with you there because I don't think it is *their* problem yet.

Susan Steinman: Well, you know, in artwork I only do things that are positive, but it doesn't mean I don't talk about things that are negative. I do believe that political action is the positive action. It is the pro-active action; that if you sit around being depressed, nothing happens. It is only by making an action you create something that is positive.

Newton Harrison: I agree.

Tim and Reiko: Thank you all for your effort and patience and your significant contribution today. I think it is time to sit down and eat!