

# Towards an Ecosophical Praxis of New Media

*Keith Armstrong*

QUT Creative Industries, Brisbane, Qld  
E-mail: k.armstrong@qut.edu.au Tel:0412 749 729

## ABSTRACT

We live under the enduring shadow of ecological crisis. Contemporary theorists have suggested that this 'problem of ecology' indicates a more general crisis of human subjectivity. Having observed much new media art praxis operates largely without awareness of the ecological implications of those practices I began developing new processes for conceptualising and developing media art works which I termed 'Ecosophical'. My objective was to discover whether such works could be used to create contexts within which participants might reflect upon connections between the 'problem of ecology' and the proposed problem of human subjectivity.

## KEYWORDS

New Media arts, Ecology, Ecosophy, Environment, Cross-Disciplinary Practices, Site Specific Installation, Interactive Environments

## INTRODUCTION

My recent investigations in and through new media practice aimed to develop new modalities of artistic praxis built upon concepts drawn from the disciplines of scientific and cultural ecology. The rationale was based upon my observation as a practising artist that existing praxis in the new media domain appeared to operate largely without awareness of the ecological implications of those practices.

I begin with a brief background to the research stating initial assumptions and outlining key informing concepts of ecology that span the arts and the sciences. I then suggest that our well-documented ecological crisis is indicative of a more general crisis of human subjectivity. I go on to propose a tangible means for engaging with this crisis through an approach to new media praxis, which I call ecosophical.

I demonstrate the findings of a study, conducted over a five-year period, that sought to establish such an ecosophical praxis. I describe how this involved the iterative development of a series of ecosophical questions that emerged from reflections upon three diverse new media works developed during that time. I illustrate this approach by focusing primarily upon the second work of the study, *Public Relations*, an installation situated in Brisbane's Brunswick Street Railway Station. Through displaying the thoughts and reflections of the passengers on an ongoing basis this work sought to investigate ideas of shared human ecologies of subjectivity.

I conclude by suggesting how other media artists might use these ecosophical questions as a point of departure for their own praxes, offering a toolkit of tactics and approaches to assist their engagement with the 'problem of ecology.'

## Background

The journey of this study took place over five years between 1996 and 2001. During that time my work developed through the theoretical demands of my readings into Ecosophical theory and my increasing engagement with ecologically inspired social and political action. The key concepts underpinning this practice were collective art-making processes and the nature of interactivity between audiences and artworks. These concepts coalesced into an approach to issues of social justice within an evolving new media arts practice.



Figure 1: Public Relations, 1997-8, Sonja de Sterke

The process of investigation incorporated the production of three major art works, all of which explored themes on the relationship between the ecological crisis and the crisis of human subjectivity described by Fry [14], Guattari [15], [16], and Conley [12].

The first project, called #14 [1], was started early in the study in 1996 and was shown in Spring Hill Baths swimming pool (Brisbane) during the International Arts Festival of that year. The second project, discussed in depth later in this paper, was called *Public Relations*

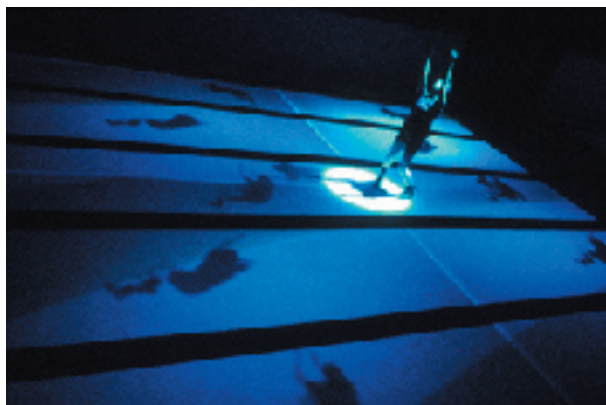


Figure 2: #14 Performance, 1996, Andrea Higgins

[2], a large-scale electronic installation for Brisbane's commuter hub, Fortitude Valley Railway station. It had an installation component (On Line) and a web site component (Off Line). The third project, *transit lounge* [3], was an interactive installation designed for the foyer of Brisbane city centre building 'Metro Arts' in 1999 which was later shown in 2000 at 'Artspace Visual Arts Centre' in Sydney.



**Figure 3: transit\_lounge, 1999-00, Sonja de Sterke**

These artworks were all primarily designed for public places outside of the traditional arts institutions. They were formed from my understanding of Ecosophical praxis at each stage in the journey, and subsequent reflection upon these works was the principal means for propelling the course of this study and my emergent praxis.

The purpose of inquiry into the digital arts is not to affirm what is, but to promote the becoming of what is not-yet, the grounds of the future as they exist in the present. [13]

#### Key Assumptions

My research developed upon the following assumptions:

- We are living in a time of ecological crisis.
- The problem has become common knowledge, particularly through frequent media coverage.
- There is little evidence to suggest that we are addressing the root causes of this crisis.
- Most people would prefer to act constructively in the face of this situation, but do not know how to act in a way that might be effective

Hence:

- Tackling a shared problem such as this requires appropriate action from all members of society.
- Cultural practitioners can and should contribute to this task through application of their disciplines.
- Whilst we should be reflective about our actions lest we risk accidentally exacerbating problems this should be weighed against the fact that time is at a premium.

#### Key Informing Concepts of Ecology

The word Ecology is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos' meaning household or living-place [11]. Whilst Ecology is still used most commonly within popular language to denote a concern for the protection of the environment it is specifically a science whose key concerns are the integrity, homeostasis and diversity of natural systems.

Critical (philosophical) Ecology is a dynamic field of cultural debate concerned with the links between how we think and act as humans, and therefore how we act towards each other and the broader natural systems of which we are a part. (See Merchant [23], Naess [24], Sessions [26], Baker, [6]). Critical Ecology emerged in part from the school of theory typified by the Frankfurt School [23] and also from the debates surrounding the ethical dimensions that scientific ecology had raised as it

struggled to deal with the implications of an improving understanding of humanity's adverse impact upon global ecosystems. [8], [25]. Writers such as Merchant [22], [23] have drawn clear distinctions between humankind's will for domination of each other and the domination that mankind desires over natural systems.

'Ecological Art' movements of the 1980s and 1990s emerged in response to a greater understanding of environmental crises with artists seeking to image the tensions created by the moral and ethical dilemmas of ecology (eg. Dominique Mazeud's 'The Great Cleaning of the Rio Grande' [21], Andy Goldsworthy's numerous photo essays (1980-2002), or Joan Brassill's work such as 'Where Yesterday May be Tomorrow' [10]). However whilst such artists identified human blame for our ecological woes, few dealt with how this crisis of our making had come about and was being sustained.

A range of commentators began to speak of a broader crisis, that of the social, cultural and spiritual (Guattari [15], [16], Sessions [26] & Naess [24]). They argued that if humans are now understood to be indivisible from a natural ecology then it follows that humanity itself and its social systems must also be in crisis. These crises must therefore be rooted within our complex social ecologies and the ecologies of inorganic environments that we produce, in our being and becoming. They further argued that all these ecologies work within each other and with great complexity, and hence any solutions that might be found to the broader problem of ecology would need to be actively multidisciplinary. It is this broader understanding of the 'problem of ecology' that informed my study, through its focus upon aspects of the human dimensions of the problem.

*Ecology must have a foundation in Ecosophy, in a wisdom about natural cycles and spontaneous movement. "Ecosophy" is the wisdom (sophia) about dwelling (eco or oikos). Ecology of the physical world must have a basis in personal ecology. [19]*

Because humanity remains largely unable to deal with many of the root causes of our ecological crises, this implies that the 'problem of ecology' is in fact a deeper problem, a problem of coming to terms with something that is indelibly intertwined with our sense of self. Guattari [16] suggests that the roots of the ecological crisis lie in a more general crisis of the social, political and existential. Similarly David Bohm counsels that:

*A change of meaning is necessary to change this world politically, economically and socially. But that change must begin with the individual; it must change for him (sic.) ... if meaning is a key part of reality, then, once society, the individual and relationships are seen to mean something different a fundamental change has taken place. [5]*

Guattari [18] also argues that our crisis of subjectivity is suggested by a neutral or disinterested relationship to "incorporeal species, such as music, the arts, cinema". He appeals strongly for a newly active engagement with aesthetic activities, reminding us of their undeniable power to effect change within the realm of subjectivity. Similarly Fry [12] reminds us that with power falls the responsibility to engage constructively:

*Cultural weapons are like water. Try to grab them and, metaphorically, they pass through your fingers - they seem weak. Yet, like water, try to block them when they have volume and are on the move, and they are unstoppable and sweep all in their path.*

Fry's words seek remind practitioners of their role to fan the processes of change. This task of taking responsibility for our subjectivity means trying to gain an understanding of how we know and how we think, as a means for understanding therefore how and why we act. This is an investigation that Sydney's 'EcoDesign Foundation' has pursued through the 1990s, occasionally presenting contemporary arts shows such as the exhibition 'Waste not Waste' [4] as a means for generating discussion and debate to advance their ideas of "sustainments":

What is being said then is that the task of making a new foundation of thought.. is about the inscription of an ecology of mind of sustainment in which it becomes possible to act. An environment of thinking is the common domain in which the actual transformation of environments is fundamentally transformed.. that is by changes of thought, value, perception, meaning all effectively changing everything.. through this so much of the wasted and the valueless suddenly can be seen to have considerable value, whereas so much that is highly valued is exposed to be worthless. [12]

Guattari [17] provides another way of thinking about the task by calling for intellectuals and artists to play a key role in engaging with the problem of ecology by producing "toolkits composed of concepts, percepts and affects which diverse publics will use at their convenience".

### **INSTIGATING ECOSOPHICAL APPROACHES**

This emerging body of theory crystallised in the form of a series of Ecosophical questions that were evolved throughout the study. As each of the study's new media works were developed, reflection led to the development of theory, which in turn was used to develop subsequent stages of these works. The three projects were developed collaboratively and drew at varying times upon specific skills in hardware and software design.

The study aimed to develop works that would become accepted and integrated within the spaces that they inhabited. The two major public art installation works, *Public Relations (On Line & Off Line)* and *transit lounge* were developed in active participation with people who regularly used those sites (a major city railway station and a busy building foyer). For each of them the creative processes of research, development and production were designed to develop relationships with the communities using those sites, whilst also attempting to attract and engage further diverse audiences.

*Public Relations* sought to create a context where participants might experience a sense of their embeddedness. Hence emphasis was placed upon process and interaction through the evolution of networks of relationships (both human and non-human). This approach was developed throughout the study as a strategy for highlighting and harnessing difference between ecological partners that together form

ecological systems, using these differences as a means for directing the progress of the artistic work.

Both *Public Relations* and *transit lounge* were controlled by computer systems that continually sensed changes within their ecology using them as stimuli for determining the presentation of image and sound within those spaces. Human participants within those spaces were asked to become involved within scenarios, which also entailed their interaction with other participants.

These strategies were employed as a means for investigating, through praxis, the crises of subjectivity that underpin the problem of ecology. These works extended the familiar notion of site specificity in that they were custom-designed for the environment they were located in and that they were able to adapt and change continually with that space and its complex dynamics. This was realised through the detection and employment of particular sensed conditions, chosen as being representative of energy transfers within a site and its inhabitants' systems of flow, exchange and recycling. Therefore sensed conditions were chosen for their contextual, ecosophical significance.

For *transit lounge*, sensed conditions included changes in movement, light, sound and temperature within the space, which became the means for adapting and developing an audiovisual script (directed by a simple digital lifeform) in real time. For *Public Relations* sensed conditions were the ideas and reflections of travelers gathered in text form, which became the content matter for a regularly updated series animated texts and movement patterns displayed upon the wall. Therefore participants within both of those 'media spaces' were responsible for generating some of those changes (eg. sound and movement for *transit lounge* or texts for *Public Relations*). However in both cases other environmental parameters beyond their immediate control also contributed to shaping the direction of the work (eg. light and temperature, and daily train movements).

### **Ecosophical Questioning**

The Ecosophical questions were developed throughout the study through a process of ongoing action and reflection, drawing both on the three major projects/experiments and ongoing processes of theoretical development. The questions were intensively refined and rewritten at key junctures between 1996 and 2001. Whilst they only partially summarise the complex interwoven stories of the five-year creative research project they provide insight into how three substantial, fully realised Ecosophical new media works were produced. They also point to future research from a position of advanced standing.

In order to further illustrate this approach, I will now focus specifically upon the study's second major work, *Public Relations*, discussing its development, positioning it within the arc of the entire research and outlining its contribution to the development of the study's ecosophical questions.

### **Public Relations**

*Public Relations* was developed from the preceding Ecosophical questions for praxis that had emerged from the #14 performance project. By that stage I had

begun to read the problem of ecology as a problem of subjectivity. Hence I decided to produce a work that might enhance and increase awareness of interpersonal subjectivity amongst its audiences.



**Figure 4: Public Relations, 1997-8, Sonja de Sterke**

*Public Relations* employed the rail network as a simple ecological metaphor that alluded to common avenues of passage and interchange between places and spaces of great difference and diversity. Within that ecology the work also framed the ideas and thoughts of the passengers as being part of the shared, human ecologies of subjectivity. I opted to focus around what I theorised as being a key contributing factor within human subjectivity; a broad based lack of awareness of ecological self, leading to misconstrued negotiation of place within communal, ecological space and time.

I had long noted that there appeared to be limited communication between strangers in stations and on trains in Brisbane and interstate. (This contrasted deeply to my prior experiences traveling by railway throughout India that were often an openly social affair). However I decided to avoid attempting to foster direct verbal dialogue amongst passengers, believing that *Public Relations* would be more effective when agitating at more subtle levels. I intended that the work should assist in developing a reflective climate at Brunswick Street Station within which the passenger/participants might begin to perceive the complex linkages already existing between them, through the visual manifestation of their thoughts. I considered this approach as a long-term strategy upon which increasing levels of Ecosophical awareness might be built as well as a means for counteracting the somewhat foreboding underground presence of Brunswick Street Railway Station.

My own life experiences had told me that reciprocity was often encouraged by common understandings developed out of shared histories. I theorised that if people could be reminded of their common ground then this would, over time, increase the likelihood of their engaging in acts of reciprocity.

This led me to reflect that passengers must share many more travel habits and rituals than they might be aware of (or at least actively acknowledge). I began to question whether these passengers' ideas and thoughts, invoked by the experiences of mass transit, would also indicate such a congruity. This question was inspired by commonalities I had personally identified with strangers after chance meetings whilst traveling on trains and buses, leading me to posit that Queensland

Rail (Q-Rail) passengers would similarly share historic/narrative pools. I reflected that highlighting passenger commonalities within an unexpected context might foster individual and collective awareness, ultimately assisting to promote relational thinking.

I proposed therefore the implementation of an electronic message board, framed strategically as an artwork within the public space of the station. I suggested that passengers' ideas might be presented within such a work as a kind of collective memory bank of shared narratives, something that I as the artist would facilitate to evolve and grow over time. I proposed that this collective experience of reading other people's ideas within a shared public space would foster an increasing interpersonal sensitivity. I believed this would allow passengers to better see themselves within the ideas of others.

*Public Relations* was comprised of two elements, *On Line* and *Off Line*. *Public Relations (On Line)* became a major electronic public artwork in Brunswick Street Railway Station, accompanied by an animated web site,



**Figure 5: Public Relations, 1997-8, Sonja de Sterke**

*Public Relations (Off Line)*, which partially mimicked the physical work in virtual space. Designed for a sixty-by-four metre concrete wall opposite Platform 1, the physical work comprised a hybrid form constructed from several thousand lights. These were used to illuminate an impression of the Q-Rail network map drawn on the wall in black tracking, covering an area between Brisbane and its adjacent Gold and Sunshine Coasts. They were also used to display texts electronically throughout the day to the general public, as they stood on the platform or sat inside stopping trains. By collecting thoughts and ideas from passengers during the work's three-month installation on some simple common themes, I was able to instigate a re-programmable collective memory bank, which presented animated texts on an ongoing basis.

Each text's specific timing was choreographed around train arrival and departure times and the declared travel time of its originating passenger (when supplied). The work was also able to light particular individual stations on the network map and present animations that swept across the entire sixty-metre length of the wall.

To encourage participation I implemented four diverse modes of text gathering from the public. These involved paper slips posted in a collection box (mounted prominently at the station), submission via the web site, and a fax and telephone answering service. I also

decided that these four response options should be advertised regularly on the artwork itself, and on a series of posters. These responses were then used in subsequent re-programming of the artwork.

I requested responses based upon five simple themes which I judged would have relevance to all commuters:

- What do you notice outside the train?
- What do you notice inside the train?
- What do you notice at stations?
- What do you and others do when traveling?  
(i.e. your habits/thoughts/activities)
- Any other contents/remarks/ideas?

After the work had been on display for two months I began to note an increase in public responses that spoke for a deeper sense of connectedness extending beyond examination of self. Typical responses concerning passengers' observations (condensed for use on the display, but with the original sensibilities maintained) were:



Figure 6: Public Relations, 1997-8, Sonja de Sterke

*People getting connected.*

*How I connect.*

*Watching people you know are watching you.*

*Looks that never pass comment.*

*Non-admitted smiles.*

*Watching our future generations.*

*Our sound in other people's places.*

*Parts of the circuit.*

I noted that these responses had begun to deal with a sense of connectedness extended beyond introspective examinations of self. Subsequent participation by an increasing number of voices indicated a positive development of content matter around philosophies of interconnection and reciprocity in ways that were appropriate for the time, place and contexts of the work's participating audiences.

Throughout the installed period of three months I conducted interviews with passengers to determine whether such processes of interaction might allude to an emergent spirit of collective solidarity or belonging evidenced within these texts. The following respondents alluded to a sense of commonality of experience between passengers:

Some of the things you see on there you think yourself.

It lets you know what other people are thinking and a lot of times it shows you that a lot of people are thinking along the same lines basically, that the things you think are not original really. A lot of other people are thinking the same things whilst they are standing waiting for trains.. or while they are sitting riding on trains.

If you've got to look for it, I reckon it's a good idea, you've got to sit back and think, what is it meant to be, it's a bit of a release, something to do when you are waiting for the train. It's not jumping out at you, so you can sit back and say, what is it saying, what is it doing, it's great. It's more of a reflection thing. It's sort of good to just let your mind wander, what is he trying to say here, what is it telling? I find I have a lot of the same questions and thoughts, yeah it's good!

Passenger feedback on whether the work was successful on deeper levels with respect to the Ecosophical pointers proved less conclusive. Whilst relatively few people alluded directly to potential social benefits that the work might invoke, there were notable exceptions:

There's been quite a few good comments on there, about the interaction or lack of it on trains or lack of. Yeh, talking to each other on trains, it's a bit of a no-no isn't it, sometimes it happens but not very often, but this one lets you know what is happening. It's a way to get to people to talk to each other indirectly I suppose.

One respondent suggested that the work was akin to a piece of "action research", with ideas being generated, fed back to audiences and hence generating more responses over time, declaring,

It increases awareness. Any.. feedback system increases an awareness and speeds up the evolution of that system over time.

#### The Evolution of the Ecosophical Questions

These have been summarized under the headings

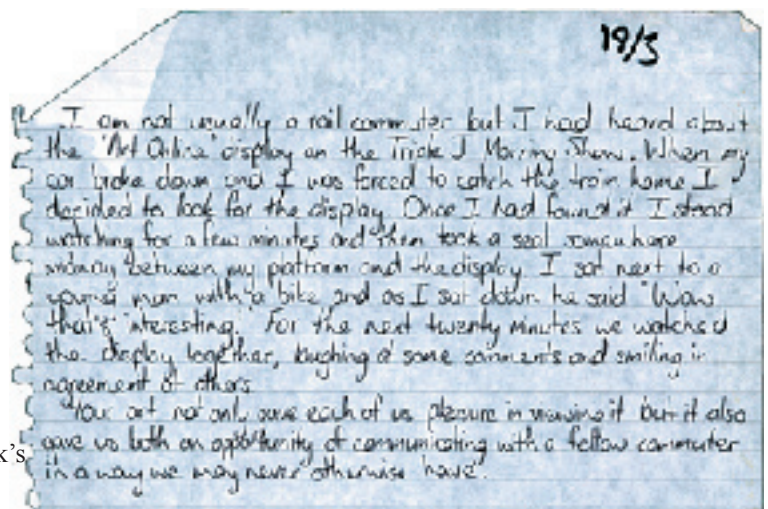


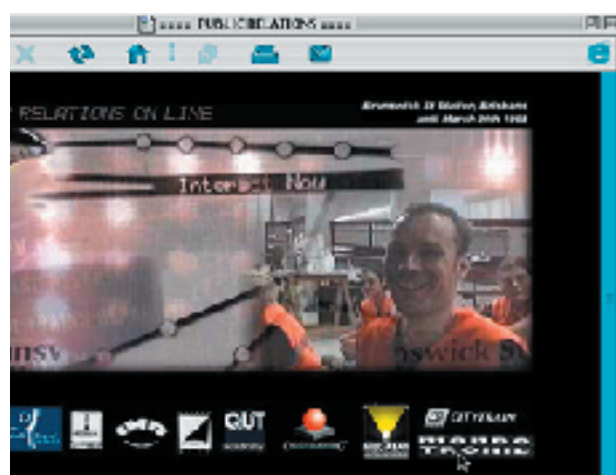
Figure 7: Public Relations Passenger Response, 1998

early, interim and latest, indicating their approximate placement within the arc of the study.

#### Early Ecosophical Questions

The initial series of ecosophical questions were established in late 1996 after completing the #14

*Performance Project.* At that time I shifted focus towards an interactive installation form that I called the ‘media space’ that would not involve the staging of



**Figure 8: Public Relations (Off Line) Home Page, 1997–8**

live events. Hence these early ecosophical questions focused subsequent new media works within categories of philosophy, process, praxis and product. Furthermore these questions retained focus on the study’s three key directions of site specificity, the sensing of ecosystemic changes and the framing of audiences as active participants within the creation of the work. They were subsequently employed to design the study’s second work, *Public Relations*.

#### Interim Ecosophical Questions

After *Public Relations* was completed I began to refine the earlier questions. During that time a number of key political events occurring in Australia influenced me to develop a renewed approach to the design of Ecosophical work in order to incorporate more contemporary sociopolitical content. I resolved to continue the design strategy of sensing ecosystemic changes as a primary means for developing and evolving works attuned with the site and its inhabitants’ activities. This built on *Public Relations*’ successful approach of using passengers’ written statements to highlight interpersonal relationships amongst users of that site.

In order to further clarify an approach for investigating how crises of subjectivity might underpin the problem of ecology I resolved to maintain focus upon the nurturing and development of interpersonal relationships. This was based upon the assertion that to understand and appreciate the rich interconnections imbued within living ecologies also requires us to understand and appreciate the rich interconnections already existing and potentially imbuable between participants and their environments.

I divided these questions into two categories. Firstly the strategies or invoking techniques that might lead to the production of an Ecosophical work, and secondly those that examined the work’s subsequent effectiveness in the development of relationships between work, participants and artists. These questions also hinted that Ecosophical productions should work to assume a role of stewardship over the relational health of their sites and its inhabitants through negotiating dialogue based on reciprocity amongst all parties.

These questions became key tools for designing the final public art installation work *transit lounge*. I introduced this work in an interview published in ‘Real Time’.

*I conceived of the installation as a nonlinear world that would be affected by audience activity. So I’ve located it in an area where the environment is always changing and yet people have some ownership, however abstract, of the space. [20]*

*transit lounge* was realised as a site-specific media space installation designed within the main foyer/entry space of Brisbane’s ‘Metro Arts’ (and later redeveloped for the main gallery/entrance space to Sydney’s ‘Artspace Visual Arts Centre’). Consistent with previous works it involved the detection and harnessing of specific sensed changes within its spaces of display to direct the work, in this instance people movement, sound, temperature and light levels.

#### Latest Questions

I began to realise that the vital link for all these works, which I had yet to sufficiently explore, was the particular qualities of interaction experience allowed by media spaces, and therefore what they might contribute to the making of meaning for participants. To investigate these deeper connections between interaction and ecology I decided to draw upon scientific ecology’s principles of energy transfer, conceptualising participant-work interactions as being experiences of energy flows (paralleled by the operation of natural ecologies). This led me to understand that participants must now become incorporated into the heart of the works in a very embodied way, as a means through which they could live the experiences as a precursor for making meaning from them.

Hence these new questions for Ecosophical praxis proposed works that would become metaphorically indicative of Ecosophical principles and their complex interrelationships through the direct and indirect allusions embodied within their core interactive principles. This approach differed from the process employed for *Public Relations* whereby content matter was developed that sought to illustrate or model a principle, being subsequently delivered to audiences who could still choose to engage at the level of spectator. Hence I determined that future Ecosophical works would require a more directly active participation from each participant, proposing integrated, bodily experiences that might invoke a poetics of energy transfer as a strategy for invoking its deeper subtleties.

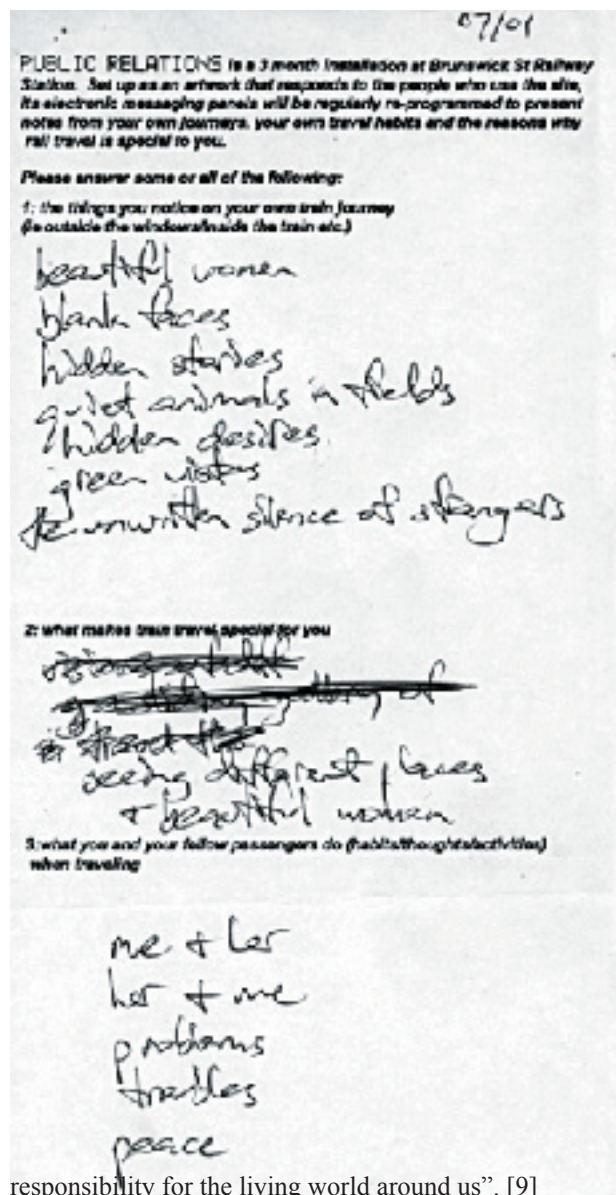
It should be noted that these new questions still encompass much of the spirit and underlying philosophies of the entire research and hence do not render the earlier questions obsolete. Rather they present a renewed angle that pre-empt both further research and the emergent praxes of other interested practitioners.

The questions at the conclusion of the study became (in summary):

Q-1. Can the work can be identified as being a part of a cyclical process of experiencing, something consistent with the action research model that characterised this entire study? This implies the need to carefully shape the way in which participants interface with new ‘media

spaces', so that they experience the work through a 'living' of the experience that the work either instigates or sets the context for. It is this living that becomes the key factor in the subsequent processes of making meaning for participants.

Q-2. Is a whole field experience being constituted from which a poetics of energy transfer might be seen to develop? The term poetics refers to what Judith Wright calls a "responsibility" that forms a way of knowing and living in the world? Wright describes this poetics as that which fosters "an awareness of our relationship to and



responsibility for the living world around us". [9]

**Figure 9: Public Relations Passenger Response, 1998**

Q-3. Because works should allude to the processes of energy flow from place to place within ecological systems, energy must actually pass through participants in a way that makes them integral parts of the cycles of energy transfer, exchange and recycling. Therefore are participants are actually woven within the experience and systemic operation of the work itself?

Q-4. Are participants becoming involved within broad scale processes of dialogue that involve both the work

and all other participants, and through such processes of exchange and transfer may they begin to feel part of a broader and broadening dialogue which incorporates both the work and all other participants?

Q-5. Does the work succeed in balancing both human and non-human sensed changes within the works' overall patterns of energy exchange?

Q-6. Will the energy transfers inherent within the work be consistent with scientific ecological principles that considers energy transfers and exchanges within the work as woven into systems of flow, traveling from sources to sinks, or being recycled and re-utilised?

Q-7. Will the work react to major imbalances occurring at places of energy transfer in a system in ways that may potentially cause a catastrophic failure of the whole system.

Q-8-10. are more speculative questions and require further research. They ask whether the act of participation generates meaning in ways that can be seen to align with the whole field of ecology and hence offer us insights on our failures to understand the implications of mass disturbances to ecosystems? Whilst the answers to these complex questions lie outside the scope of this particular research they are vital questions that future Ecosophical practitioners should attempt to respond to.

Hence these questions, refined at the conclusion of the study, collectively form a series of succinct, directed yet prescriptive questions. They have since been applied to a new work, under development at the time of writing, called 'Intimate Transactions'.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have presented key moments from a substantial and detailed journey of research that mapped a dynamic and developing praxis. The study resulted in a number of publicly acclaimed art works, which have in turn generated a scholarly discourse in the arts community and strongly advanced my core theoretical goal; of understanding how to develop an Ecosophical new media space praxis.

Whilst I have summarised how this praxis was developed through a series of continually refined questions, I caution that this study's history should not be assumed to be linear. The subsequent development and production of new works simply marks a renewed place from which to continue the ongoing processes of this research, for me and potentially for other artists.

However the significance of this journey for me as a practitioner has been much more than simply the development of a vital tool kit of techniques, strategies, ideas and experiences, or even a track record of artistic achievement.

One of the things I now realise that I achieved through these processes of investigation is a better understanding of my own subjectivity, and therefore what it might mean to think ecologically. I found that the personal changes that I was inspired to make throughout the course of this study, both as a practitioner and as a citizen have all contributed to a deepening examination of the problem of ecology. My understandings of Ecosophy and its relationship to artistic practice

therefore also involved a renewed understanding of life itself. This continues to inspire some profound changes in my interests, pastimes, peer groupings, employment choices, investment choices, teaching approaches and a plethora of other life-things.

This, I realise now, is because this study was not simply undertaken, but actually lived and experienced in a way that I found my own life merging with it into a desirable inseparability.

Because this journey assisted me to better understand who I am, what I know and how I know it, it finally led me to understand how I might act as a practising artist. These are all aspects of subjectivity that are intimately relational, contextual and integrated.

Elizabeth Baker writes how these must all be understood together:

*In a time of environmental exigency, being ecological involves telling ourselves and others stories about what it means to be a human embodied and embedded. [7]*

Therefore like Baker I suggest that an Ecosophical praxis must involve a deepening understanding of subjectivity, epistemology and ethics, situated within social and ecological systems that acknowledge their processes of relationality, historicity, reflexivity and narrativity.

In conclusion I would like to offer the following suggestions on tactics and approaches for aspiring Ecosophical practitioners who might also wish to undertake their own significant journeys.

>> Always strive to promote meetings between artistic practice and the problem of ecology because poetics may offer up invaluable strategies that other disciplines cannot yet imagine.

>> Consider your praxis as creating contexts for creative conversation and focus your discussions in ways that allow ideas to emerge from participants' own experiences.

>> Acknowledge that whilst the deeply enmeshed interplays of ecological, physical, artistic and social forces in Ecosophical praxis might promote uncertainty, they should never promote paralysis. Time is of the essence.

>> Acknowledge that the focus of your work may be contested by those with deeply vested interests in ecologically destructive practices (artistic or otherwise).

>> Your praxis will always be limited by what you can know and furthermore how you can know it. Hence always plan for contingency and unpredictability because the directions that you take through these deeply problematical terrains will require a mixture of poetical sensibility and strategic political nous.

>> Always develop your work in ways that are highly interdisciplinary, because you will never know the sanctuary of fixed solutions.

Only your ongoing, considered experiments lie ahead.

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