



***Becoming Earthly* – Imagining new futures**

OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR ARTS AND ECOLOGY SEMINAR SERIES

PROGRAMME DATES: 30.07.2020; 31.07.2020; 07.08.2020; 21.08.2020; 04.09.2020; 11 or 19.09.2020

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 10.7.2020

“Who are we? What are we? Who and what are ‘we’ that is not only human?” – Donna Haraway

Becoming Earthly reflects a need to develop a shift in perspective towards care for the thin skin of the earth that is the atmosphere and topsoil on which all life depends. We surprisingly know very little about this skin. It is only a few kilometres in depth and yet all our futures, human and nonhuman, are dependent upon it. In the thinking of Bruno Latour, anthropologist and an influential political philosopher, we have to land, become terrestrial rather than seeking escape to another planet. We are *locked into* this thin skin of earth.

Latour calls upon the arts to support a process of becoming terrestrial. In a quieter period, he argues, it might make sense for scientists to limit the collaboration of artists to decoration and popularization. We now need aesthetics to sensitise us to other ways of life. We need artists to sensitise us to the shape of things to come.

However, becoming earthly is disorientating. It fundamentally challenges our beliefs, values and interests. For many artists, the pressure to address the climate emergency in which we are all implicated, can feel like an intrusion into creative practice. It can feel fundamentally at odds with established notions of creative expression. How do we create and develop artistic practice inside the thin skin that is our world, towards a future where both people and the planet will flourish? How can we work as artists and arts organisations in a critically informed way in relation to art and ecology?

The Barn is inviting applications from artists working across all media who wish to participate in an experimental learning space, a thought experiment of sorts. We are interested in practitioners who are open to the challenge that Latour presents in becoming earthly.

It is not necessary to have prior experience of ecology, but essential to be curious about exploring new forms of work through dialogue. We want to encourage applications across all the arts and are



particularly keen to encourage those artists working in theatre, dance, performance and new media. We will consider applications from collectives and ensembles, as well as individuals. While we cannot support artists financially, our aim is to create the conditions to open up new innovative forms of practice that respond imaginatively to the challenges we now face.

The Programme

Becoming Earthly has been conceived as a process of thinking through doing, informed by many years of hands-on interventions at the Barn. The process is in itself ecological rather than outcome driven. It will consist of six sessions, 2 hours in length, delivered via Zoom. Four sessions will be hosted by different thought leaders including internationally renowned artist **John Newling**, artist researcher **Wallace Heim**, philosopher **Johan Siebers** and anthropologist and feldenkrais practitioner **Paolo Maccagno**. The introductory session will be led by curator and Head of Programme at the Barn Simone Stewart and members of the *Becoming Earthly* Steering Group who are listed at the end of the document. The final session will be a work-in-progress/sharing session. We will present ideas and thinking we have explored during our time together. This could be in the form of a live presentation, readings, or performance. The format for this will be determined collaboratively by the group. To this final session, we will invite key arts and ecological stakeholders' and funders including Creative Scotland along with the session hosts, with the aim of opening up connections for artists and potential partners.

The Barn has conceived these sessions around the thematic juxtapositions of doubt and pleasure, lament and improvisation, shame and play as provocations or openings into possible connections between ecology and art. These themes lend themselves to performative explorations raising questions such as; What does it mean to perceive our condition as a fragile, temporary state of being, wholly dependent upon the natural systems that surround us? How can these pairings help us to explore the paradigm of ecology not just on the level of concept and structures but through the aesthetic and bodily plains of feelings and perceptions?

Application closes: 10.07.2020 at 5pm.

Session 1: Thursday 30 July 2020, 2.30 – 4.30 pm

***Becoming Earthly* Introduction**

This session will be led by representatives from the *Becoming Earthly* Steering Group (see end of document).

The Barn | Burn O' Bennie | Banchory | AB31 5QA | www.thebarnarts.co.uk | 01330826520
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Session 2: Friday 31st July 2020, 2.30 – 4.30 pm

Making peace with gravity

This session will be led by Paolo Maccagno who works on the edge of different academic traditions, developing experimental projects between art, anthropology and education. He is currently an honorary Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen and practices as an anthropologist (PHD) and Feldenkrais teacher (a somatic educational method based on movement).

Session 3: August 2020 Friday 7th August 2020, 2,30-4.30 pm

The pleasure in doubt

This session will be led by Johan Siebers associate Professor of Philosophy and Divinity at the University of Middlesex London. Siebers is concerned with developing philosophy as a practice within everyday life. This focus supports learning about the forces that shape society and how we might begin to imagine these futures differently, both individually and collectively, once we become aware of the openness and uncertainty of the future and how we relate to it.

Session 4: Friday 21st August 2020, 2.30 – 4.30 pm

An apology to nature: observation as improvisation

This session will be led by the artist John Newling who is internationally renowned as a pioneer of art with a social purpose. His works explore the natural world and the social and economic systems of society – such as money or religion. To this end Newling has innovated the possibilities and benefits for art in a renewed social and conceptual framework.

Session 5: Friday 4th September 2020, 2.30 – 4.30 pm

How do we care? An exploration of shame and play

This session will be led by Wallace Heim, who writes, researches and makes art in the median zone where culture, art and human performance meet the other-than-human, meet nature. In these



conjunctions of the animate, the material and the elemental, new forms of human experience can emerge; new modes of understanding and action can take shape.

Session 6: Friday 11th or Saturday 19th September 2020 (to be confirmed)

***Becoming Earthly* work-in-progress**

This session will be led by the participants supported by the session leaders and Steering Group members.

As part of these sessions, we will set exploratory tasks and provide a selection of contextual material for artists to listen to, read, watch, participate and respond to. The *Becoming Earthly* blog posts are an opportunity for the session leaders and participants to share their perspectives with the Barn's wider networks, audiences and communities.



Application Process

Deadline: 10.7.2020 at 3pm.

Please tell us the following:

- What question will you bring to the process of *Becoming Earthly*? (max 30 words)
- What difference will this opportunity make to my practice as an artist/ arts collective/ ensemble? (max 300 words)

There are seven places available. In our selection process, the first cut will be based on the most compelling answers to the first question. Please include your name, address, summary CV and a small selection of images/documentation of previous work, sent via email to mail@thebarnarts.co.uk with **the subject: 'Becoming Earthly'**. All enquiries should be made to the same email address with the same subject. We will accept up to 5 images/photographs + titles in a single PDF document and 1 video or audio as a YouTube or Vimeo link.

Please confirm in your submission that you are willing and able to attend all six sessions.

Please forward your application by the **deadline 10.7.2020 at 5pm.**

Though the Barn strives to be an inclusive organisation, due to current conditions our sessions will be conducted through online platforms, and all participants should be aware of this. Please contact us with any concerns, needs or barriers to taking part. We expect everyone who participates in this open call to share our positive approach to inclusivity and diversity as far as the current limitations permits.

As an open learning space, we want to ensure that we are as supportive as possible to those with neurodiversity. Please let us know about any special educational needs, as we may be able to put systems in place to support learning as far as the current limitations permit.

About the Barn

For the last 25 years, the Barn has presented a rich and diverse cultural programme. Many artists have used our building, wild garden, walled gardens and the connecting allotments as a site of experimentation and thinking for arts and ecology. Long, sustained relationships with renowned artists

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such as John Newling and Newton Harrison, Helen Smith and Maja Zeco, have helped our organisation to develop and lead the conversation around arts in rural environments in the 21st century.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic and the planetary emergency - the combined catastrophes of climate change, mass extinction and a degradation of ecosystems - has prompted the Barn to move into a prolific period of artistic creativity. We are continuing to explore, interrogate and reconcile our relationship to the climate crisis as Newling and Harrison in particular have done through their work. To this end, we want to further develop a creative learning space in partnership with artists for on-going evaluation and reflection, as well as a platform for future innovation.

The Barn, grew out of a series of interwoven ecologies; different groups using our spaces and environments in a range of overlapping ways, each altering and transforming as people and circumstances changed. In this way, the Barn can be understood as an ongoing experiment in art and ecology. As such our organisation is in a unique position to share, collaborate, inform and connect thinking with artists during this moment of global change.

The *Becoming Earthly* Steering Group includes the Barn's Senior Leadership Team: Simone Stewart, (curator), Victoria Layt, Cath du Preez; Professor Emeritus Anne Douglas, artist researcher and Trustee of the Barn; Chris Fremantle, Research Fellow and Lecturer at Gray's School of Art, Director of ecoartscotland; Mark Hope, co-founder and Trustee of the Barn; Glen Benson, Honorary Curator of Artifacts at the Linnean Society and Senior Safety Adviser, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.