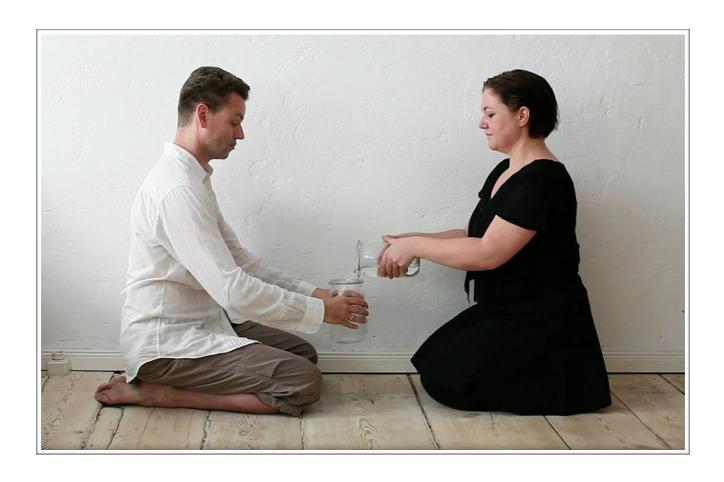
GESTURES OF INTENT

a year of nomadic social practice.



Performance art enacting peace, through presence and participation.

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Α

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, I decided to live the upcoming year as a work of art. It has been an exercise in approaching my life as a sculptural form, crafting it by implementing mindful techniques in day to day living, in order to propagate peace. Much philosophic, spiritual and creative work that investigates peace suggests that *awareness* is an effective tool to achieving it. Two reliable sources of activating awareness in my life have come through the practice of mindfulness; and through the dissolution of my life into my art (and vice versa).

This dissolution consisted purely of a decision to do so. I had discovered over the past decade, in my performative research in the field of nomadic social practice, that changing nothing but the *intention* to make something *art* is fundamentally formative to the experience, and can enable shifts in perception to occur. In keeping with this profound simplicity, I have not undertaken any particular ritual to separate this year from my otherwise life, except the intention to do so.

It has been a nomadic journey, moving from place to place for a week to a couple of months at a time. It is then that this work has inter-cultural concerns, and is placed in the space between spaces—in the process of doing. It does not reside in one site nor refer to an object, although it is acutely aware of the importance of place and the environmental influence on the way that living elements relate to each other. Nationalism, when attached exclusively to a place, presents itself as a major obstacle to this quest for peace.

I have enacted this experiment as a study into learning in the everyday, enquiring into what the qualitative attributes to rendering an experience educational are, and when it is useful to do so. Of key concern to this pursuit of pedagogy is that presence is much more important than attendance.

At the time of writing I am still within this performative year and so naturally, this paper is a part of that work of art. These words embrace the freedom attributed to creative works, and can be perceived accordingly: trusting your intuition and your own associations as they arise to provide you with meaning.

Be

PEACE

The word peace itself evokes a deep resonance that defies singular meaning or pragmatic explanation. Hearing it or seeing it written always interrupts me, moves physically through my body and demands my attention. Although I cannot define peace, what I do know is that it is for everyone and everything, and that we need more of it. Peace musters notions of the sacred, and in order for the sacred to be egalitarian in a global community, we could try releasing from dogmatic religious connotations, and returning it to the innately human realm of affect, from which no-one is excluded.

Peace seems to hold an allusive distance from possibility—more like a utopian fantasy than a living reality. Australian philosopher Mary Zournazi and German filmmaker Wim Wenders entered into a ten year conversation on Inventing Peace. Culminating in 2013 and published as a book, a radio essay, and two films, the work responds to their observation that "Much of our everyday thinking and language is bereft of how to imagine and talk about peace" offering that "We have to work on how it is received and how it is perceived in order to be able to even start talking about peace again". Their dialogue is "an invitation to think along, to look at the perception of peace and contemplate what it can mean to you." They do not pretend to know what peace is either, but rather offer ways to "reanimate the peace process in our minds." I have accepted Wim and Mary's invitation to think along with them, and I refer to their combined voice often when locating the relevance an action has as a peace making gesture.

In order for us to be able to imagine—or invent—peace, it needs to be thought of as something close to us, something we can understand as present and possible. Something we can touch, everyday. Peace activist and Zen Buddhist monk, Tích Nhât Hanh, has helped to show me a way to peace through living in a state of mindfulness, by making it applicable to everyday actions.

To my mind, the idea that doing the dishes is unpleasant can only occur when you aren't doing the dishes. Once you are standing in front of the sink with your sleeves rolled up and your hands in warm water, it really isn't so bad. If I am incapable of washing the dishes joyfully, if I want to finish them quickly so I can go and have a cup of tea, I am equally incapable of drinking the tea joyfully. With the cup in my hands will be

¹ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace: A dialogue on perception. I.B. Taurus, UK and US, 2013. Print; Radio National, Australia, 2014. Radio Essay. accessed online http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/radioton- ic/features/inventing-peace/> accessed April 2015;
For the films for this project see <http://inventing-peace.com/films/> accessed April 2015.

thinking if what to do next... I will always be dragged into the future, never able to enjoy the present moment.²

Like Tích Nhât Hanh, Mary and Wim entreat that to find peace, we must activate awareness in our everyday lives - that we might look at the mundane anew, and recreate this world.

Quintessentially, peace is the imagining of a different world, but a world that already surrounds us - it is the making and unmaking of ritual and tradition in our everyday lives in as much as it is holy and sacred. It involves 'becoming aware' as the philosopher Martin Buber would put it. This becoming aware is a special kind of observation or of looking at the world that involves compassion, grace and care. The everyday and the holy involve a care toward the future, this care involves an ethics that is founded in the relations between the infinite and the everyday.³

While peace is for everyone, it can be reached through the individual, and I try to work on myself before worrying about others in the hope that, as Tích Nhât Hanh believes:

Under the influence of awareness, you become more attentive, understanding and loving, and your presence not only nourishes you and makes you lovelier, it enhances them as well. Our entire society can be changed by one person's peaceful presence.⁴

Politically, when there is a cry for peace, it often comes through that which it is not. We are reminded of peace when we encounter its other—war; violence. And worst of all, it seems like all of the existing paths that promise to lead toward peace making require sacrificing peace in order to walk them—like the manipulative nature of politics or the aggressive nature of much activism. This is not to say that peace is outside of the duality of human experience that includes pain and conflict, but that it requires a different approach to dealing with the spectrum of experience that does not incite unrest. Mary and Wim muse that "Peace is not conflict resolution per se; it is a method or technique that emerges out of the world when it is lived more truthfully, more honestly, with care compassion and trust just as it involves active curiosity."⁵

How do we create models for not just imagining, but living peace, now? I wonder what role performance art and the everyday can offer as experimental models for new active dialogues around peace—

² Tích Nhât Hanh The Sun My Heart Parallax press, California, US, 1988. Print. p17.

³ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi *Inventing Peace*. I.B. Taurus, UK and US, 2013. Print. p4.

⁴ Tích Nhật Hanh The Sun My Heart. p41

⁵ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace. p6

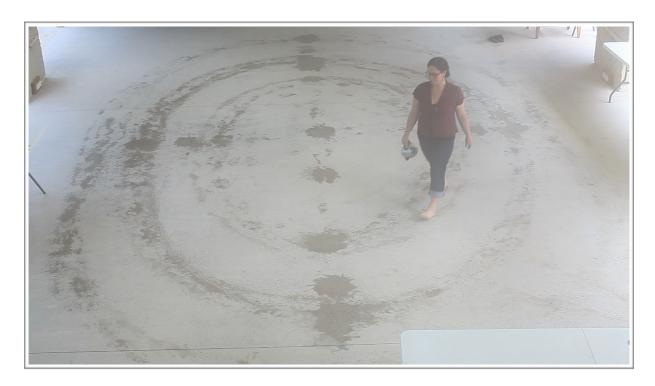
not just to ignite the imagination to what peace might mean, but to throw it into action to see how it might be lived.

INTENTIONS

To be transparent about my journey, my intentions must be outlined, as they have guided me through this process. My intentions are not an agenda, in that an agenda—like a motive—requests a certain type of outcome. Intentions on the other hand do not know where they will lead, but rather set the tone for how they will be led, and in their presupposition can define the act that follows. The way things pan out is not always as we planned, but it is the terms under which they were entered into that gives them meaning.

As I have outlined, my meta-intention is to contribute to the dialogue of peace, by imagining ways for it to exist on earth and living them as performative acts. Meta-intentions and day to day intentions are the same thing, as one enables the other. My day to day intentions become visible through the performance documents that follow.

We cannot have something that we allocate to elsewhere, for then it is not here. It is therefore my task to be peace as much as I can, to contribute to the living knowledge of peace on earth. This is not to lock it down to being one thing or the other, nor to suggest that my methods will necessarily work for others, but rather to expand the vocabulary and living memories around it so we can each imagine more clearly how peace can be.



- 3. ARCHIVAL ALCHEMY

At the outset of this year, I performed the intentions that were relevant to me at the time to 20 or so people at Ufer studios in Berlin. I sat on a small brown armchair low to the ground with my legs crossed. In one hand I held a pile of ripped up pieces of note paper, and in the other I held a pair of barbers scissors. I would read the intentions out, and periodically, when the feeling took me, I would cut a piece of hair, and place it in a pile in front of me.



I intend not to dump on my flatmate over breakfast.

I intend to do at least an hour of meditation every day.

I intend to do yoga every morning.

I intend to keep on top of my accounts and quarterly taxes.

I intend to write those four letters.

I intend to get the flat tyre on the bike I borrowed fixed.

I intend to replace the bananas I ate.

I intend to fall in love and have a family.

I intend to lose 1/8 of my body weight.

I intend to nurture a daily writing practice.

I intend to update my website.

I intend to turn green waste into compost.

I intend to fertilise the garden bi-annually.

I intend to grow my own veggies.

I intend to be kind to absolutely every person I meet.

I intend to own less things.

I intend to sleep outdoors.

I intend to be more active in the life of my goddaughter.

I intend to have good intentions behind every action, breath, move and interaction I make.

I intend to visit my old friend in jail.

I intend to hang three pictures in my lounge room.

I intend to buy a house.

I intend to write reflective pieces on my performance work thoroughly and consistently.

I intend to come to terms with my use of aesthetics in my art practice.

I intend to develop an engaged and meaningful life practice.

I intend to keep up my exercise routine when I travel.

I intend to support my creative community at home while I am abroad.

I intend to thank Klaus, again.

I intend to get new lenses in my glasses.

I intend to cut my hair.

I

EVERYDAY

What does it mean to turn everything into art? Or, as American philosopher John Dewey asks "Why is there repulsion when the high achievements of fine art are brought into connection with common life?" Art is the realm of aesthetics. I define aesthetics to be the provocation of feeling, pitched in its antithetical place to anaesthetic—which is the numbing of feeling. An experience, or an encounter with a concept, is in itself a full and completed artwork, in that it is an aesthetic experience for itself. To work immaterially with lived experiences is to strip art back to the base core of what it is. Everything is experience, and for Dewey "Because experience is the fulfilment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception that is esthetic experience."

How then, does something come to be art, when everything can be art? This is in the naming, and can happen as a precursor or in the aftermath of action. In 1984, performance artist Linda Mary Montano "appropriated all time as performance time or art" and for artist J. Morgan Puett, "being is the practice." It is a lived practice, where the term *practice* relates closely to the Buddhist notion of practice as an approach to your life that has certain rituals involved. For Montano, this meant that "every minute of my life was an opportunity for that kind of higher—not higher, but that kind of consciousness, a kind of awareness or—sacredness." ¹⁰

As I mentioned earlier, I have placed no particular rituals to demarcate this time as art, I have just named it such. In light of my post-colonial situation, being born as an Australian citizen, the act of naming can be layered with the historical guilt of unrightfully claiming and renaming things that belong to others. I might then ask myself what right I have got to turn everything into art and flood the world with a series of experiences that I assume to be art merely because I named them such?

Perhaps I don't have that right. So in an act of surrender to the greater discourse of which I am a part (and as any act of peace making requires constant acts of surrender) I decided that I will look for peer

⁶ John Dewey Art As Experience Penguin Books, UK, 1934. Print. p20

⁷ ibid. p **19**

⁸ Linda Mary Montano Letters from Linda M. Montano. Routledge, 2005. Print. p48

⁹ J. Morgan Puett From Chicago to Mildred's Lane interviewed by Daniel Tucker in Immersive Life Practices, University of Chicago Press, 2014. Print. p94

¹⁰ Linda Mary Montano Letters from Linda M. Montano. p48

validation to justify the parts of this journey I make public. Peer validation is the format of curation and review that I most respect, and so I employ it here as a defining means: someone else must acknowledge a thing/action to be in the realm of aesthetics in order for me to talk publicly of it. The acknowledgement can occur in many ways: from an exhibition; residency or conference; to those things privately decided on by those involved. This is an act of care that accommodates my place in the ecologies I am a part of. Through small shared gestures, we can build a greater harmonious dialogue.

J. Morgan Puett coined a term that now proliferates among the social-art practitioners stemming from Chicago. The term is hooshing:

hoosh (verb)

To create order of something with sensitivity to the effect of things on people; to transform a space according to an ecological aesthetic. No space is too homely to hoosh.

hoosh (noun)

An arrangement of objects, functional and otherwise by hooshing; or

A social democracy of entities both human and nonhuman. 11

In this term we can see the genealogy of how the care for the self and ones immediate environment by approaching everything artfully can lead to sociopolitical ramifications. Here, the verb associated with the arrangement of objects in one's space becomes, as a noun, the creation of an egalitarian society for all living beings.



The kitchen at Mildred's Lane 12

¹¹ Claire Pentecost A Glossary in Daniel Tucker(ed) Immersive Life Practices University of Chicago Press, 2014. Print. p211

¹² J Morgan Puett and Mark Dion created *Mildred's Lane*, a 'Living Art Complexity', where, with their son Grey Rabbit Puett the act of being and learning are the daily life practice. The place runs as a home, an artists residency and an alternative school, and in the summer they mount projects that students can attend for course fees. I visited Mildred's Lane overnight as a part of my research in November 2014 and took this photograph of the kitchen area.

II

MOVING

I am moving again. I am a white Australian woman, and so I hold one of the more privileged passports in the world—if you count the number of places I am allowed to travel to without first acquiring a visa as equating to privilege. I look at my luggage and think of the native people of my land, the Aboriginals, the longest lasting nomads on the planet, and how they travelled on the land for indeterminate time with nothing but their body, not even carrying water. I muse at the things I think I need, stored neatly in my bags accompanying me on the journey, knowing that, like my Aboriginal ancestors, what I really carry cannot be separated from my being, it lies in my body, at the edges of it, as it interacts with the worlds it will encounter along the way.

It is all that I have with me, and regardless of site and company, my body is my medium. It encapsulates sacred knowledge: experiential and cultural memory of my birth place; ancestral knowledge from my family; existential knowledge of the things I have encountered; and the intuitive knowledge of my ability to perceive. My body stays with me, the present body, the body of memory, the performing body, the living body. It carries an oscillating thought as I dwell on hybrid ground—one that asks me constantly: what is my responsibility to my birth place, and what can I offer and learn as an outsider?

I am going walkabout. Why? Because, as Cuban born artist and social choreographer Ernesto Pujol puts it

I believe in the itinerant artist. I believe that sometimes a society needs a fresh pair of eyes through which to visit its new, and old topics. Itinerant artists, or itinerant curators, like the itinerant photographers of the 19th century, have important social roles to enact. They can offer snapshots of a sited peoples, portraits that allow them to regard themselves anew and become better known beyond their lands. And this is reciprocal, for artists gain insights in the process.¹³

It is to activate and maintain my own awareness, and to learn experientially about difference, that the learning may lead me to a place of non-judgement (another essential ingredient for peace).

The paradox of the contemporary nomad is that while they are not bound to the laws and rituals of one place, the global intricacies and processes of migration keep us bound tightly to nationality. I wonder how Deleuze and Guattari's stateless nomadic subject moves through the spaces of controlled migration? Even Aboriginal nomads adhered to geographical borders, taking responsibility for certain ar-

¹³ Ernesto Pujol, An Atlas of Small Places in Jacobs and Zieske (eds) Fernweh: A Travelling Curators Project, Jovis Verlag, 2015. Print. p33

eas of land—but their borders were natural, and the land was the law. We move not only across the land, but thorough the social constructions of state defined identity, and what a complex and messy area of humanity that is. Knowing that my birth country is one of the most unjust nations when it comes to refugees and immigration brings contradictory feelings to my chosen nomadic situation.

Vietnamese filmmaker and cultural theorist Trinh T Minh-ha, in her book *elsewhere, within here: immi-gration, refugeeism and the boundary event* speaks of "people who have been dispossessed and forced to leave for an uncertain destiny, rejected time and again, returned to the sea or to the no-mans-land of border zones; for these unwanted expatriated, it seems that all attempts at exalting the achievements of exile are but desperate efforts to quell the crippling sorrow of homelessness and estrangement." But even when displaced people settle into a new home, the shame of difference can linger on through generations. American cultural theorist Lewis Hyde, in his book *Trickster Makes This World* talks of the double shame felt by the children of immigrant parents: "Children who live in two worlds are vulnerable to several shames, several sets of eyes watching them. Most obviously of course, the parents and the school want the child to know that their way is *the* way, and that all other ways lack true dignity. Immigrant children get to be shamed, first *by* their parents, and then they get to be ashamed *of* their parents." ¹⁵

To move nomadically as art practice is to acknowledge that what I am doing freely is inhabiting the space of constant motion that many are thrust into, or restricted from, against their will and against their control. Might it become my *white shame* that I choose to move here? Is it my post-colonial guilt to acknowledge my Celtic bloodline while inhabiting a land of ancient Dreaming? Shame and guilt are intrinsic qualities of displaced people, and for people who—by choosing to live in many places at once—know pluralism. But the shame and the guilt are not productive, so whenever they arise, I attempt to transform them into awareness in order that they become a source for healing—creating dialogues of non-exclusivity. The ramifications of globalisation are just beginning to call clearly, and they're doing it very loudly—demanding a new approach to difference.

* * *

I have been thinking for some time about migration as a site for performance. Moving through it I am performing in it, contributing with my presence and participation, and in that supporting the sterile

¹⁴ Trinh T Minh-ha Elsewhere Within Here: immigration, refugees and the boundary event Routledge, US/UK, 2011. Print. p29

¹⁵ Lewis Hyde Trickster Makes This World: How disruptive imagination creates culture Cannongate, UK, 1998 Print p159–160

herding of human numbers that inhabits this space between spaces. Within this rigid space it is hard to find individuality, or room for play.

My text interventions into places of migration started accidentally. I have been working with kindness. I have made up little kindness cards that I carry with me and give out at will or randomly. I am putting my luggage on the x-ray table when one of the kindness cards falls into the grey plastic tub with my shoes. I am gathering my goods when I look at it, pick it up, and pass it to the security guard scanning my things. "This is for you". She smiles and puts it in her pocket. I picture her bestowing that kindness on the next person to move by her. From then on I have littered my identification documents with these kindness cards, making sure that they are there, visible, when migration officers open the folders. Later, I would apply this at the German Foreigners Office as I joined swarms of refugees lining up for hours from dawn in hope of some good news about my application for residence. Sometimes, to not even be seen that day. The cards often incite a smile, and it is my hope that they will extend that sentiment onto others who need it too. It is a small, humble gesture, but we never know what the ripple effect might be. Dear displaced folks, what symptoms of your inflicted migration are shared with any who changes their home-place, by choice or by force? Please educate me of your issues, that I might create a borderless space for multicultural tolerance and co-habitation within me.



Acts of Kindness in Spaces of Migration

-2. NOWHERE.

A man stands on a street-corner in New York City, nowhere to go.

A woman stands in a pine forest in southern Germany, nowhere to go.

A man stands in the desert in central Australia, nowhere in particular to go.

They look around, 360 degrees and at every angle the landscape looks exactly the same.

A bird flies and an ant burrows.

He goes forward, she goes right, he goes backward.

I'll go left.

III

ARRIVING ELSEWHERE

My consciousness comes into my body, laying here, but I am not here, I am someone else right now. My eyes do not open, yet. I'm in a single bed. It is quite firm. Many people have lain in this bed before me. I forget who I am even after I remember where I am. Tích Nhât Hanh suggests that being in a state of having arrived in your body can make peace possible by always being where you are, now. "The realisation that we have already arrived, that we don't have to travel any further, that we are already here, can give us peace and joy." ¹⁶

I am Elsewhere—a residency in North Carolina in the US held in a three story former thrift store and boarding house. It's a living museum, its residents are the art. I have been here for three days and I have not left the building (as a part of the Elsewhere collective, most of your daily living needs are taken care of in-house). I decide to walk. I do not have a map, so I walk in a straight line. I am on the main street of an urban centre, and I am told there is a park, that way—hopefully I'll see it from this street.

Walking helps to place me somewhere. An aeroplane, train or car delivers me, but walking places me. It is the rhythm of my body collaborating with the rhythm of a place to find our shared patterns, and acknowledge our differences. About four or five blocks down, a man approaches and walks with me. He is kind and speaks with a thick accent. Exchanging pleasantries I discover that he is from Eastern Europe, and that he is here temporarily, studying engineering. He invites me for a drink somewhere. I decline. I walk quickly, but he easily keeps my pace. I do not want to be rude to this person, but I really do not want company. I want to be in this city, to feel it, silently. I answer his questions briefly and continue walking at a comfortable pace. He continues with me. He enquires after my profession. I tell him I am an artist. He asks me to elaborate. I tell him I work with social performance, and talk about how the artworks I have been making lately look at placing mindful technique between people in regular daily activities, to see different ways that we can learn to relate to each other and our environment.

"We can do it right now" I offer "How about, we continue walking together, but we do not speak a word, and every 5 minutes, an alarm will go off, prompting us to speak our minds briefly?" He looks at me blankly. I continue "We do that for 30 minutes, and then we part". He asks me to explain a little

¹⁶ Tích Nhật Hanh Touching Peace, Parallax Press, 1992, Print. p36

 $^{^{17}}$ This performance outline is from a body of work of mine, *mindful encounters* 2013 - 2014.

<www.mindfulencounters.net> accessed March 2015

further, so I talk with him about approaching every day, and everything we do with a kind of raised awareness, akin to how we would approach something if we called it a performance, and how that can lead to extraordinary shifts in perception.

We cross the road and start to walk back. Ok, he agrees to the action. I set my alarm for every 5 minutes, and we start off. I am retracing my steps, so I feel comfortable that I know where I am going. In silence, I enjoy his company. We stop and look at things, wait for each other and then move on. For the first few alarms we notice our surroundings and I ask him questions about the place. He tells me what he can, but we are both outsiders, and as every place has its local secrets, sacred knowledge that is only available to those who have proven their worth over time. Outsiders can experience great generosity and awakenings through their hosts, but it can be wise to stay at a respectful distance, for when we know that we have discovered something that is sacred local knowledge, we also know we have witnessed a part of it perishing. As Minh-ha puts it "The predicament of crossing boundaries cannot be merely accepted or rejected. If it is problematic to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one." 18

About 20 minutes into our walk, the alarm breaks our silence and Julien starts to talk about his past:

"I was thinking that one of these buildings was beautiful. See the reflection of the top section — a blue like an ocean type of colour. It took my mind to the ocean. I used to be a marine, back in the day and as a part of my way of releasing the stress of being far away from the land, I used to just go to the front of the boat and just sit there watching the ocean. The serenity of the blue.

There is no limit, your eye travels as far until the water and the sky kind of meet. Not literally but you know the idea is — it's quiet and there's nothing around you, only you, and what you see.

And when the skies are clear it just absolutely... I barely believe it, theres another world within our world..."

19

There are many worlds within our world, and in each world are layers and layers of worlds. Places can reveal pathways to peace, if we listen intently. Mary and Wim believe that "Places are in peace, they know nothing else. We know it, the... 'something else', the 'absence of peace".²⁰ We can learn this peace from places by listening—patiently, attentively, and wholly, whether or not we are familiar with the territory. This deep listening is a tool for communing with the land. For Aboriginal people it is as

¹⁸ Trinh T Minh-ha Elsewhere Within Here p34

 $^{^{19}}$ Transcribed from an audio recording taken during our walk, I do not know Julien's last name, nor any other details to credit him further.

²⁰ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace. p140

much a part of being as breathing—to be one with the land. They are a culture that are at peace with the land—they do not destroy ecologies, but live with them, as them. We all can too, if we listen. To do this, Mary and Wim suggest "to just be there...in those spaces and listen to them as much as possible. Yes, just listen. One can do that. We have that ability. We call it 'a sense of place'. In ancient times that was a much more developed human perception. It was one of our senses like seeing, touching, tasting smelling. People depended on their sense of place for survival. Too often today, our navigation systems have replaced that capacity. Nowadays its actually a human propensity in danger of disappearance."²¹

To activate these receptors can be hard in some places—it is much easier to drown out the screams of the subways with the sound of our choosing by wearing headphones in public. And we see this behaviour proliferate in the cities, as people do not want to listen to the atmosphere and its chilling shrieks for help. Amongst *all-those-people* there is the illusion that nothing is anyone's responsibility. Philosopher and theologian Mark C Taylor, in his autobiographical work *Field Notes From Elsewhere* talks about how, in the anonymity of the city "It seems as if my identity virtually dissolves before my own eyes. The play of reflection becomes infinite. Windows reflect windows to create a city of glass where homeless nomads roam."²² The world is our home, nomads or not, we are all occupying it.

And I feel at home in this town now. Julian's story has elated me (it is stories of water—they follow me). I ponder on how the decision to make that walk down the road into a performance made us both behave very differently and activate the listening between place, and people. I didn't shoo him off as another bloke trying to pick me up on the street, and he cut the small talk and told me poetic truths about his life. In our sparing speech we listened to each other and our environment deeply. When the 30 minutes was up we parted and would not meet again, but before we did, Julian talked about how thankful he was that he stumbled across this very unique encounter. I do not know what he had in mind for his evening walk, but he certainly had *an* experience, and now that it is over, he can reflect on it within his daily routine. And me, I now feel grounded in this place, this city, this state, this season. Before this walk, I was just Elsewhere.

²¹ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace. p137

²² Mark C Taylor Field Notes From Elsewhere, Columbia University Press, US, 2009. Print. p73

-1. SOMEWHERE.

Somewhere in the world, someone's phone rings. It is a loved one calling only to hear their voice.

Somewhere in the world, somebody's phone rings. It is the news of a sudden death of a close friend.

Somewhere in the world, someone's phone rings. It is a recorded message reminding them to pay their phone bill.

Somewhere in the world, somebody walks to work, and three times along the way thinks they see their first love. It's been years since they spoke. Soon, she phones him. He has contracted HIV.

Somewhere in the world somebody takes the hand of a child, and leads them to self discovery. Next door, someone takes the hand of a child, and hurts them behind closed doors.

Somewhere in the world, someone laughs at another's earnest attempt. That person never sings in public again.

Somewhere in the world, someone gives birth to a baby girl. They wanted a boy, so they smother the child in her sleep.

Somewhere in the world, someone goes for an early morning run, and finds themselves sheltering their head from shrapnel as another car bomb goes off in the street where he lives, from where his wife will never wake.

Somewhere in the world, someone lifts half the load from a young man struggling to carry two cases to the top of the subway stairs. She sets the case down there and continues on without a turn of the head.

IV

BEING

Moving around a lot, many of my meaningful relationships are maintained digitally. We have found ourselves in a time where the necessities of communication can be taken care of that way, and as this becomes more intuitive, we begin to feel through technology, too. Technology has opened up the real-physical-space encounter for redefinition. As it is when anything becomes obsolete, liberated from its utility function, it becomes available to unprecedented experimentation. This makes it a super exciting time for human to human encounters. What shall we do with these bodies in space, now?

How can the mind and spirit keep up with the increasing hyper-mobility of humanity, and the body keep up with the instancy of electronic communication?

How can we create meaningful relationships to people and places if we have less and less time to spend in any one place?

How can we activate the things we think are important in our own lives when so many of our needs and options are prescribed to us?

When information is best received in text, how can we allow the embodied, unspoken elements of exchange to come to the forefront of our awareness, everyday?

How can we work together in the increasing isolation of densely populated urban spaces?

How can we find harmony and individuality within the slip-stream of social movement?

I don't have definitive answers, nor do I look for any, but these questions inform my performative research. I see performance art as an arena where we can experiment pre-figuratively with turning ideas into actions to enact possible futures. When art occupies elements of everyday, and becomes a lived practice, it acknowledges that there is so much potential in every step that we take, and that adding awareness to those steps can lead to building a more conscious society. Indeed, when art is a social practice, it may not create art, but build society instead. In this case, art is a research methodology, able to offer the allusive *otherness* typical to art production. Art can sometimes manage to slip through legal loop holes, and bring things to light that are otherwise suppressed or forbidden. At times art does so from a strong ethical and humane place.

"What am I looking at?" The curator asks me.

"You are looking out the window." I reply.

* * *

Out the window, I am walking again. I am ordering my thoughts while I walk. They fall into place with my steps. I talk to myself out loud a lot. I am on residency in at Cittadellarte in Biella, a small town in the north of Italy. Cittadellarte is a centre for the responsible transformation of society. With art at its core, it looks at ways that the artist can contribute to the infrastructures in society and has 'cells' in architecture, politics, spirituality, fashion, design, education, economy, ecology and more.²³ It is founded by, and is the home residence of Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto. I am considering what Pistoletto called the *Third Paradise*. The third paradise is a place where the first and second paradise come together in perfect harmony. The first being nature and the second being man made artifice.

In Biella, I would walk the third paradise, tracing its three circle form through buildings, on the street and by the river to ponder what the coming together of nature and artifice meant. But they are not actually different, so how can they come together, when they were never apart? Man-made (or artifice) is the result of human thought, of intelligence, which is of course, a naturally occurring phenomenon. Therefore, to my mind, all things are natural, technology is organic, and things are as they are meant to be. This is not to disregard responsibility, as it is that when we become aware that something we are doing is wrong, we must stop, change. Many of the things that have led to our ecological crisis started out as exciting inventions. As time goes on we learn which parts are harmful, destructive. Then, there is no pride in continuing on regardless. Like a defeated army sending its last men to the slaughter, there is no reward for sticking to your guns, we must be humble and change our ways. As ecosystems are living and constantly changing, what is right and wrong will continue to change too. We have to constantly reassess and—like scientists—enjoy it when discovery proves us wrong, enabling us to understand things better. If we listen to the place it will tell us what it needs, regardless of its makeup. Wim and Mary perceive that "the entire earth is talking to us, not only mother nature ... but also what we have constructed"²⁴



²³ Europalia. Michelangelo Pistoletto. Cittadellarte. Snoeck-Ducaji and Zoon, Belgium, 2003. Print.

²⁴ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace: A dialogue on perception. I.B. Taurus, UK and US, 2013. Print.



Walking the Third Paradise

The question of nature and artifice is like the separation of body and mind—a common misconception, and something that mindful practice teaches you to dissolve by reconnecting the two, consciously. The unconscious mind is the mind that is always alert, aware of the body. It is the same part of the mind that knows when you have been tapped on the shoulder, or that warns you that you are approaching something hot. Therefore, the body is always aware and contributing to our thoughts and decisions, at a very deep level. You can access this information and use it to help with decisions simply by feeling your body and asking it how it feels about something. I call it *thinking with my toes*—if I can get down as far as my toes and see what they think about something, then I am sure I have asked every part of my body, starting with the initial instinct usually coming from the belly, quickly transferred to the head, and then moving down the corpus. As the mind and body are one, so is man and the environment. There is nothing in between us, and that nothing is the stuff that makes us.

* * *

Sometimes it helps to intervene on the run of things a little—to provide a platform for a people or place to speak up, when their whisper has been drowned out. In Biella, while researching the architecture of social space in collaboration with Italian artist Samuele Piazza and American artist Matthew Mazzotta, we mounted a project called *emBEDded labor*. We placed a bed in the main square of the town to facilitate public conversations about the refusal of labour, and what it means *not to work* in a society that identifies heavily with a working ethic, but in a time of post financial-crises, has failing industry.²⁵

Many people came and spoke to us, and we gathered ideas for further action around the topic. And sometimes, we just lay on the bed. This performative act was a very effective research methodology. The sculptural gesture of displacing domestic furniture engaged the public and gave a platform for voices to be heard which, in itself, can be the most healing thing. From the information we gathered, we imagined a time-bank²⁶ cooperative would work well in the area—best run by a local group, but effectively instigated by nomadic creative practitioners. And so when art is research, it remains in between outcomes, creating a needed conduit for social constructs to be revised through a different lens, and acted on accordingly.



emBEDded Labor

²⁵ Access the research outcomes for emBEDded labor at

< http://media.wix.com/ugd/bc40c8_8b978f33e55d45e19ad248a2063ae251.pdf> accessed April 2015

²⁶ A time bank is a reciprocity-based work trading system in which hours are the currency. Definition from < http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/time-bank accessed April 2015

O

THE SPACE BETWEEN

As I dwell in the hybrid space between cultures, so do I work with the intangible space between people. The form and content of my creative work is actions that look at the process of relating. Person to person, or person to place, the encounter is the practice, and it takes place in the moment of essential exchange and mutuality that is the root level of sociability and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Through this set of living relations in our daily lives we can make peace possible. Wim and Mary feel that "realising that anything of any value will not be just fabricated by somebody but will exist because it happens between me and you, between one and the other, and that only in that relation anything can shape up that might then eventually be valuable and might eventually be called peace." That such a process can hold the potential to be living art is articulated by Dewey in his investigation into the aesthetic experience: "For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the aesthetic." It is a conscious decision to live, and an awareness that we are doing so together.

To be in this space between is to be in constant movement, it is the realm of *doing*. The work produced in this space is inherently immaterial, and resides in attitudes, decisions, systems and networks. This kind of creative practice has been increasingly in visibility in the past decade. In unprecedented ways, art has become a place where the artist is called upon not only to inspire, but to do, directly—evident in the discourse of socially engaged art practice emerging prominently. Throughout history, art has had a tendency to *fill in the gaps*—wherever they present themselves. Now, as we tire of looking to distrusted political sources for social transformation, the creative realm has stepped in, and is causing welcome ripples as direct actions in social contexts. To Wim and Mary, "For real events to touch us deeply, they must resonate with us in direct and meaningful ways." By making things happen, instead of making things, performance art has the potential to create this direct affect.

I went from being an artist who makes things, to an artist who makes things happen.

— Jeremy Deller³⁰

²⁷ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace. Radio Essay, part one. 5'10"

²⁸ John Dewey Art As Experience. p14

²⁹ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi *Inventing Peace*. p2

³⁰ Jeremy Deller quoted in Nato Thomson (ed) *Living As Form* Creative Time Books and MIT Press, US, 2012. Print. p17

The mindfulness that Tích Nhât Hanh speaks of activating in everyday life can be likened to the history of performance and 'art and the everyday' that was defined by Alan Kaprow in the 1960s— both ask that you add a layer of awareness to your daily activities. This history of performance art can be seen as the roots for socially engaged art practice wherein artists work with communities and social issues to give voice and create dialogues to effect living changes. American art critic and curator, Marcia Tucker, when referring to the art of the late 60s and early 70s, states that "the new conceptual and performance-based work required a change of focus, encouraging viewers to become active rather than passive participants in the work of art. This shift was reminiscent of the way that Buddhism encourages practitioners to awaken the potentialities of their own minds, to move past reactive and habitual responses, and to understand that... 'we are what we experience." 31

By the late 1990s, Thích Nhat Hânh had founded an active strand of buddhism known as *engaged buddhism* which holds many similar attributes to the discourse of socially engaged art practice. Artist Suzanne Lacy compares them in saying that "Both engaged Buddhism and engaged art are inherently antimaterialist and antihierarchical forms of advocacy for meaning-making within society. Both respond to the increasing visibility of suffering in the world, now and everywhere through mass media."³² This move toward anti hierarchical exchange can be a resistance to capitalist dialogues that subordinate even in the guise of liberation, that train us to blindly follow or defiantly distrust authority within a patriarchal system. By occupying my life as a performance, I can actively question and dissolve such a system and its hold on my existence—even if only momentarily—as art gives me the courage (and the excuse) to do so. And one moment always leads to the next.

³¹ Marcia Tucker No Title in JacobsandBaas (eds) The Buddha Mind In Contemporary Art University of California, 2004. Print. p78

³² Suzanne Lacy Having It Good in Suzanne Lacy Leaving Art: Writing s on performance, politics and publics, Duke University Press, UK 2010. Print. p105

I don't always know exactly what to do from moment to moment, but trusting the unknown through what Pujol calls "educated not-knowing" is an important part of the process of discovering what I cannot know yet. It is a good starting point simply to ask questions, rather than make demands or assumptions, as questions make room for emergence. As a nomadic social practitioner arriving to contribute where I might not be privy to the concerns of the place, a humble approach is required, that intricacies may reveal themselves through questioning. After arriving in a place, it does the nomadic artist well to ask (silently and aloud) the same questions that Mary and Wim ask when they search for peace "questions such as 'What needs to be done here?', 'What is our responsibility?' Or simply: 'How can I help?'"³⁴

There is ignorance and then there is *not-knowing*, an educated not-knowing that is understood as willingly giving up control, temporarily suspending all previous thoughts and further thinking, so as to allow our instincts and intuitions to lead our performers' bodies into previously unimaginable sites filled with gestural possibilities. Nevertheless, though beautiful, we remain in control of these suspensions, we remain masters of their beginnings and ends. But not-knowing has many more layers of depth.

There is a deeper not-knowing when we suddenly lose everything indefinitely. Our bodies stand without tools because they have proven inadequate. We face a crisis of the intellect because our information has proven useless. We feel lost; we are lost. It is a brutally terrifying moment, a kind death. Yet, this darkness is where the source of true knowledge resides through the beginning of detachment from all—the birth of wisdom. Here begins the rest of our lives, the better part, as traveling performance artists.

Ernesto Pujol Sited Body, Public Visions. Silence Stillness and Walking as performance practice. McNally Books, US, 2012 Print. p97

³³ Pujol describes *Educated Not-Knowing* as follows:

³⁴ Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi Inventing Peace. p144–145

1. THE PAUSE

VI

DEPARTING

I am leaving again. Everything becomes very lucid on leaving. I realise what is important and things fall very quickly into place. There is nothing that can do it like the finality of days. No matter how much I prepare, doing things in a timely nature and making sure I am not rushing at the last minute, I will inevitably get as much done in the day or two before departing as I did in the week leading up to it. There is something activating about transition points.

This time I did not swim in the river here. That water called me daily, but the deep rocky cliffs that formed its banks kept me from immersing myself. Only yesterday I found a spot where I could access the river bed, and by then the sun was setting. I had hoped to make it there this morning, but the winds blew in and the skies clouded over. It remains an unfulfilled promise, I feel as though not having swum here is the land keeping a tie with me, asking me to return.

Or is this abandonment? Premature departure—a notice that I have not stayed here long enough, that there is more for me to do? I certainly feel that there is more, I had only just begun to understand this place and its people. I will keep this promise between myself and this river, I will return. I do not make this promise to all places, but when they ask, I must listen. Gentle abandonment is a form of letting go, of activating trust, of letting live—knowing that you can do more but resting in the confidence that if it must be done, it will happen, one way or another.

Abandonment holds open the space of desire where the promise of satisfaction is the mask of death. Can't get no satisfaction—don't even want it. Always giving by taking, abandonment is the gift of life that is the gift of death, and the gift of death that is the gift of life. — Mark C Taylor. ³⁵

The moment of closure is tied to the moment of learning. As I am enacting this year as an experiment into learning in the everyday, these periods of change are important parts of my education. As an experience draws to an end, we reflect on it, and see it apart from the continuum of experiences, and through this can gain knowledge that leads to understanding. These ruptures allow an experience to be acknowledged for itself. For Dewey this is a defining element to not just having an experience, but having an experience. "We have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment." And these breaks, while providing the qualities necessary to make an experience educa-

³⁵ Mark C Taylor Field Notes From Elsewhere. p66

³⁶ John Dewey Art As Experience. p36–37

tional, also give the experience the qualities necessary for it to be in the realm of aesthetics. "Because the actual world, that in which we live, is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and reunions, the experience of a living creature is capable of esthetic quality."³⁷

 $^{^{37}}$ ibid p16

VII

RETURNING

Home is a feeling, one I return to. Mustered by a person, place, sense or action revisited, it allows me to see things in light of last time, acknowledging change through the clarity of contrast or time gone by. Home is a comfort and a confrontation, a most challenging familiarity.

I have many homes. And I return to one of them now, bringing with me this body of expanded memories. I contribute them to my community, as a part of our reciprocal exchange. I am always humbled at how world class a small village can be. As a cultural producer, I believe it is my role to make proliferate that which I would like to see more of in the world. I have lost all anxiety of inventing the wheel, and I want only that I share meaningful experiences where they are needed. Mindful practice allows me to locate the areas of need by tuning my perception, and performance art gets me doing things in them. It is a peaceful union, one that has built a life practice for me to embody, and continue becoming, everyday.

* * *

APPENDIX

The Situation.

An outline for a living art place hosting a residency and education program.

The Situation is a living artwork in the Blue Mountains, Australia. It is a place that inspires and generates conscientious social reform through creative work.

The act of being is the art that we create, everyday. Central to our concern is harmonious existence between mankind and nature. Through residency and education programs we support the development of ways that the creative mind can work progressively within, or in dialogue with, existing (infra)structures including economy, migration, education, ecology, architecture, spirituality, domesticity, production, agriculture, nutrition and with indigenous relations and peace propagation.

We provide space for experimental pre-figurative politics to emerge as possible ways of living. We undertake a position wherein the personal is inherently political, and the social directly implies the organic organisation of humanity.

We believe in conscientious reform, as it makes room for each individual consciousness to come forward within the collective. The themes and structures of current focus at The Situation respond and change according to the needs of the time; the current people involved; and the environmental considerations at hand.

Encouraging creative works to be approached as living systems, or systems for living, we are organised as an ever changing community. Our residency and education program work together to create an atmosphere of mutual learning and growth. We foster non-hierarchical system of exchange for all beings involved.

We take 4 residents a year, for between one and two months at a time. Each resident responds to our community engagement program, and will lead a one week workshop during their stay.

The education program consists of two week live-in courses twice a year for up to 6 fellows in attendance at a time. The courses can also be attended non-residentially on application.

It is encouraged that the projects and research implemented at The Situation work with local conditions and their global implications.

Art&Life

The act of being is the artwork that we make at The Situation, everyday. It is a place where living is to be considered with the kind of awareness and attention to detail one puts into a performance. It is a living museum, constantly in the making, and the public are welcome to drop in any time.

All fellows and residents contribute to the overall running of the property and community while they are there by collaborating on the general duties needed to keep the place going. These will be listed and negotiated until everyone on-country is allocated a job, or a roster of rotary jobs is developed.

An introduction to the Art&Life component is the main content of the first day of a fellowship, which is integrated into the orientation to The Situation.

The School

The Situation holds two week live-in educational residencies two to four times a year. Each course begins with a critical overview of socially engaged art practice, and an introduction to the local areas. This part of the course will be taught be the caretaker of The Situation. The projects that come thereafter are led by the current residents, and can take whatever form necessary. Progressive research methods and expanded ideas of research outcomes are developed. You are able to work actively with the local communities or stay on the grounds of The Situation.

Each resident and their fellows decide on the hours and structure of the courses.

The courses are offered as a Socially Engaged Program to Art Academies. In the case that this is taken up, some module requirements will be taken into consideration too.

The Residency

The residency is for research and development of creative work dealing with conscientious social reform. Politically and ecologically engaged art practices are encouraged, as are practitioners working creatively in expanded fields concerning economy, migration, education, ecology, architecture, spirituality, domesticity, production, agriculture, nutrition, indigenous relations and peace propagation.

People working in all disciplines are able to apply and projects can be of a practical or research based nature.

We host four residents a year, each for 1-2 months.

Each resident will take part in our community program, and host a public event during their stay. This can be developed with The Situation at hand.

Each resident leads a week long workshop with 6-12 fellows as a part of The Situation's education program. The premise for this workshop should be outlined in the resident's application, and should include tertiary level critical engagement with the topic. Expanded and progressive pedagogical approaches are encouraged.

The residency is by invitation or by application.

The Fellowships

Participation in our educational program as a fellow in attendance of a the two week program, is by application, or as a part of enrolment in one of our associated universities.

The fellowships are by course fees or by the contributing institution affiliated with The Situation. See currency below for alternative payment methods.

Location

The Situation is a 15 acre property in the Kanimbla Valley, in the world heritage Blue Mountains, Australia. It is a 2 hour drive west of Sydney, and takes about two and a half hours on the train from Syd-

ney Central Station. It is half an hour drive from Katoomba - the largest town in the Blue Mountains, and it is a 15 minute drive from the city of Lithgow.

This location is particular for its diversity of local communities. Sitting right on the edge of a protected national parkland, it is nestled amongst the rural lives of those living on the land in the Kamimbla Valley. Meanwhile it is on the edge of two very different urban environments.

Lithgow, 14 km away, is a post industrial town with a population of about 20 000. Lithgow is of low socio-economic demographic with unemployment more than 50% higher than the average unemployment rates in Australia. It has a depressed cultural scene and the largest industry there is mining.

In the other direction you have the city of the Blue Mountains. With a population of about 70 000, much of the land in this council is protected nature. It also has one of the lowest socio-economic profiles in Australia, but has a vibrant creative culture and is known as The City Of The Arts.

Ecologically speaking, the area is also very diverse, not only in natural resources, but in its status of sustainability. There are still large areas of land in danger of excessive mining, clearing and destruction.

These combing factors of place give a broad spectrum of research particulars for residents and fellows to work with, considering our overarching concern of building conscientious social reform harmoniously between mankind and nature.

Facility

The Brick House

The brick house is a four bedroom domestic space that hosts one of the residents, and the 6 fellows when they are in attendance with their sleeping quarters and bathing facilities. The brick house also has the kitchen commons and the reading room, explained below.

The Cottage and The Cube

The cube is a studio dwelling for one person, usually the second resident.

There is also a two bedroom cottage that can accommodate a small family.

In most cases the cottage will be occupied by the person(s) currently managing and care-taking at The Situation. Should one of the residents have a family and the caretaker be a single person, these dwellings might be swapped. Fellows can apply to bring their families by request, if we can accommodate them we will.

The Studio

The Studio is an 85sqm open building with concrete floors and glass walls and a balcony overlooking the bush. This is where the residents have their work studios, and where the courses are held when the fellows are in session.

The workshop

The workshop is a 50sqm space equipped with tools for wood, ceramic and metal working. Any dirty work by the residents or fellows is done here.

The Silent Space

Down the hill is The Silent Space. Three hours a day, between 6-7am, 2-3pm and 9-10pm group meditation is sat here for those who want to. Twice a week while the fellows are in session, yoga classes are held here with a local yoga teacher. At other times, the Silent Space remains somewhere that people can retreat to for personal study and reflection where it is understood that you will not engage in general conversation with others. It can be used for special projects at the request of the fellows or residents.

The Water Shed is an outdoor bathroom that is a living growing organism. It is an open air shower area, with an outdoor bathtub and sinks where the architecture is made of plants that thrive from the water used by people in their daily washing routine.

The Reading Room

In the sunniest room of the brick house, with doors leading out to a verandah is the reading room, housing the library. There is an honour system for checking books in and out of The Situation Library, and there is a book-swap shelf. There are armchairs and small tables for people to sit at, and lots of rugs and cushions to roll around on the floor with.

The Kitchen Commons

The kitchen commons is a communal vegetarian cooperative for all currently at The Situation. When the fellows are in session during a course, the kitchen is stocked weekly for the use of all.

The first job that the fellows are given when they arrive for a course is to pull the kitchen apart and rearrange it as they see fit. This orients them to the work flow of the kitchen and begins their process of cooperation in daily life.

One meal a day is shared by all, and prepared by two people on a rotating roster basis. The wishes of the current fellows and the course in session decides what time of day the shared meal will be. Evening cleaning is to be done by everyone who didn't cook that day.

When the fellows are not in session, the residents cook and shop for food supplies at their own will, and are welcome to the supplies in the kitchen commons.

Currency

At The Situation, we accept monetary payment, time-banked hours, and we deal in Situs.

The Situ is our on-country currency at The Situation.

1 situ = 1 hour of time accumulated for work done on the property developing it for the better and more effective use of present and future groups or environmental sustainability, and may be exchanged for participation in the courses or use of the facility.

A current list of jobs available to be paid in Situ can be found on the In Situ tab of our website. You are also welcome to make us a suggestion as to how you would like to, in whole or in part, contribute to your course fees by paying in situ.

We also accept international time-banking trade on a case by case basis.

* * *

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