



**RESILIENCE LAB AND PUBLIC PROGRAM BRISTOL APRIL - NOVEMBER 2015**

Delivered by artist isik knutsdotter of Fourthland

Report of process and outcomes, including overview of exhibition and events,  
back to where we have not quite been, Arnolfini Bristol November 2015

## CONTEXT AND CONTENTS

Resilience LAB was commissioned by Aldo Rinaldi and Tessa Fitzjohn 2015.

The brief was to investigate Resilience underpinned through a 6 month residency with the Cabot Institute and University of Bristol. This report shares some of the processes involved through the residency and various discussions as outcomes. The process naturally became a dialogue between our home city of London and Bristol, the city we would visit monthly for 6 months.

All of the work produced has been the result of numerous collaborations, borrowed words, new knowings and shared imaginary.

### CONTENTS

page 3 - 7	The beginnings, The Cabot Institute and The University of Bristol
page 8 - 11	Process, analogies and method
page 12 - 16	Workshop with Cabot Institute
page 17 - 18	Conclusions, back to where we have not quite been
page 19 - 24	Outcomes
page 26 - 30	Texts around the theme, Sarah Deco, Ben Cranfeild, Hayley Shaw
page 31 - 45	Arnolfini exhibition and events, back to where we have not quite been
page 46	The threads that continue, conference event
page 47 - 48	Visual Matrix and report, Julian Manley
page 49	A Resilient Community
page 50 - 52	Legacy of the work and contributors
page 53 - 56	Testimonials

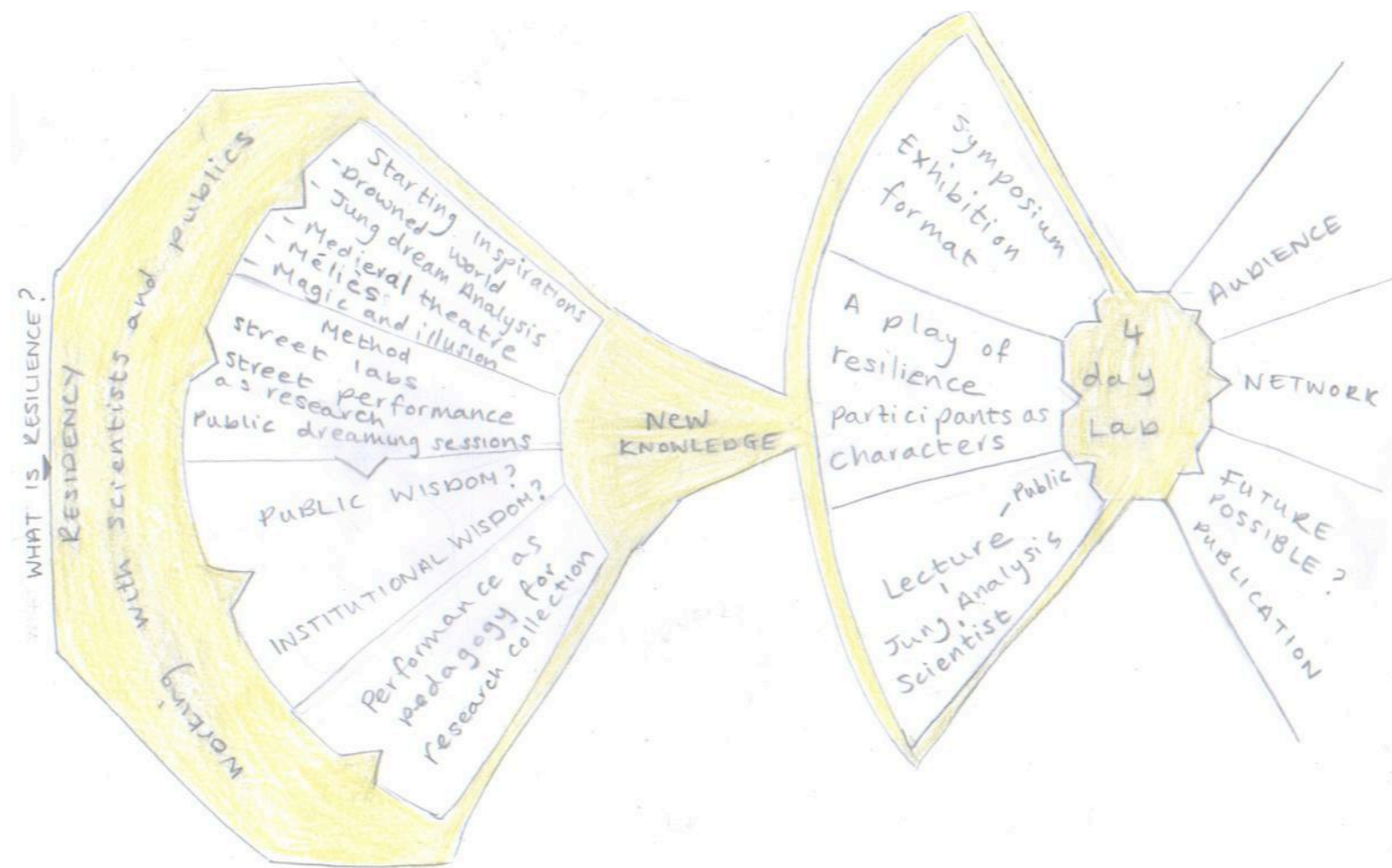
## OVERVIEW

Resilience LAB involved a public engagement program that was delivered as monthly sessions in Bristol between April and October 2015. These sessions included collaborative research meetings, performances and workshops. The process developed a strong collaboration with researchers at the Cabot Institute and wider researchers at the University of Bristol. Investigations with researchers included dialogues on uncertainty, vulnerability, haptic knowledge through research on flooding, civil engineering, geochemistry and small Island States.

After a series of initial meetings and introductory activities a methodology began to emerge, identifying oral stories, mythology and song as mechanisms to answer and probe questions on resilience. This led to establishing further collaborations in Bristol with the Island Folk Choir and researchers from group Perspectives From The Sea at Bristol University. Collaborations from further afield that worked to develop these narratives included Sarah Deco, psychotherapist, group analyst and story teller, Dr Ben Cranfield, director of PDH in humanities and cultural studies, Birkbeck University, Gail Barker, artist and Dr Julian Manley, researcher at the psychosocial research unit, University of Central Lancashire.

Emerging themes and concepts throughout the project were; I travelled with bundles, handed down and handled, trust carriers and the beginnings of culture.

These themes originated from various collaborations within the process and were used as titles for the final set of events at the Arnolfini in November 2015.



Initial chart of Resilience project plan 2015

## METHODS, PROCESS AND MATERIALS

Each meeting began with a story and a series of objects made to stimulate curiosity and a different point of meeting. At the beginning of the process we identified the use of both elemental and recycled materials to be important to develop the narratives of the work. As a starting point a series of elemental materials were wrapped in bundles and taken to our first meeting with Cabot researchers at Royal Fort House. We took samples of bone, ash, earth, rock, beeswax, wood and horsehair wrapped in cloth. Each researcher was given a bundle to unwrap and the session evolved to include arrangement and discussion based on the materials. This session was repeated with various publics at a series of meetings that we called Resilience Suppers. The stories and metaphors collected about the materials and resilience during this process went on to become the material narratives used in the final exhibition and performances. Final material used included beeswax, newspaper, ash, wood, metal and wool.

The idea of story embedded within the program was built on further through collaborations with Dr Ben Cranfield and Sarah Deco. Both collaborators were invited to respond to experiencing our processes and performances. These collaborations continued to develop throughout the process and both contributors had text work included as part of the exhibition and events.

## PROCESS EVENTS, WORKSHOPS AND PUBLIC PROGRAM

- Resilience suppers in Bristol between April – October
- Trust carrying, walking the streets with objects and bundles
- Resilience workshop with Cabot Institute and Bristol University

## THE CABOT INSTITUTE

We met with several researchers at the Cabot Institute, each time arriving with a story and a selection of materials or objects. The objects facilitated a discussion about research interests. We were particularly interested in ideas of uncertainty, the measurement of uncertainty, the mitigation of uncertainty and the result that there was always going to be uncertainty.

This unknown quality became important to the essence of the work and essence of resiliency.

What thoughts went into this unknown ? how could we become less vulnerable? how could systems cope with shocks? the changing unpredictable inputs, how could it be mapped, modelled and measured?

One researcher worked particularly with ideas of *The vulnerability and integrity of non-linear systems* and introduced us to the mathematical model concerning *Self organised critically*.

These terms became particularly applicable in describing social practice throughout the process and discussing the range of inputs involved in the collaboration. We used these terms to shape the program and understand the often invisible process of collaboration and resulting group dynamics.

Other researchers re constructed ancient landscapes from rock samples, which triggered ideas of the possibility of subconscious reconstruction or creation of landscapes and places from sculptural objects and materials.

Others shared with us ideas generated from Small Island States, about the need for malleability within communities being the essence of resilience.

Two main threads emerged from the discussions, with researchers split equally between the two;

- That resilience is about being hard and firm, represented in a material that will not budge from its original shape such as a diamond
- That resilience is about the ability to form new shapes and systems such as beeswax



First meeting with Cabot Institute and a series of bundles, Bristol 2015

### **The move of openness - a move towards resilience?**

We were met by the warmth and curiosity of Richard Pancost and Hayley Shaw, director and manager of the Cabot Institute. Hayley Shaw then facilitated our interactions at the Cabot and acted as our guide. She matched our openness to the process, with an openness that inspired the same action in others who encountered our process.

This facilitated the articulation of ideas such as 'trust carriers' where a role within a group and society can simply be to carry 'the trust' that allows others to be open. This carrying of the trust, in turn, creates a collective trust and a shared common ground within diverse groups - which forms a resiliency of community.

We used this concept throughout to create a series of 'trust carrying acts' on the streets of Bristol. This involved us developing carrier objects that were carried around - the action and gesture of the carrying drew strangers into the project through their curiosity. These people through their action of trust then contributed to the project and were engaged throughout the process and final outcomes at the Arnolfini.



Trust carrying act, public process and program, Bristol 2015

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SEA RESEARCH GROUP, BRISTOL UNIVERSITY

The process led to wider collaborations across the University with the cross-disciplinary group, Perspectives From The Sea. We had several meetings and numerous follow up exchanges around the topics of myth and islands, the presence of the sea in ritual and ceremonies, and as an analogy to society. We became particularly inspired by 'crossing the line ceremonies' carried out when ships cross the equator and exchanged a range of texts and poems about sea myths and island utopias. This included an exchange of two short pieces, one by Michel Foucault and one by Giles Deleuze, that discuss utopias, heterotopias, ships and islands.

These researchers inputted throughout the process, giving us numerous reflections through their interpretations. For example, in response to a workshop we later held at the Cabot :

*"The three women in the workshop holding and playing with the twine made me think of the three fates as they appear in Greek myth. They are sometimes depicted as a maiden, a mother and a crone and they have distinct roles: Clotho spins, spinning the thread of life; Lachesis measures the yarn and chooses the length of the life; finally, Atropos cuts the thread, ending the life it represents and embodies. During the workshop, perhaps by happenstance, I was struck by how the three women seemed to be playing these roles around the participants – sometimes improvising, and sometimes moving very deliberately. The way they were manipulating the twine made me think a lot, I think, about choice and responsibility, beginnings and endings, and it was actually really moving to watch even though what they were doing was really playful, particularly when they travelled from their sitting positions and started to work across the whole space – it's one of the images that has lingered most in my mind following the workshop." - Tamsin Badcoe*



The three fates in Greek myth, image sent to us from Tamsin Badcoe



Domain of Neptunus Rex, image sent to us by Jimmy Packman



Collecting 'the beginnings of culture', Bristol 2015

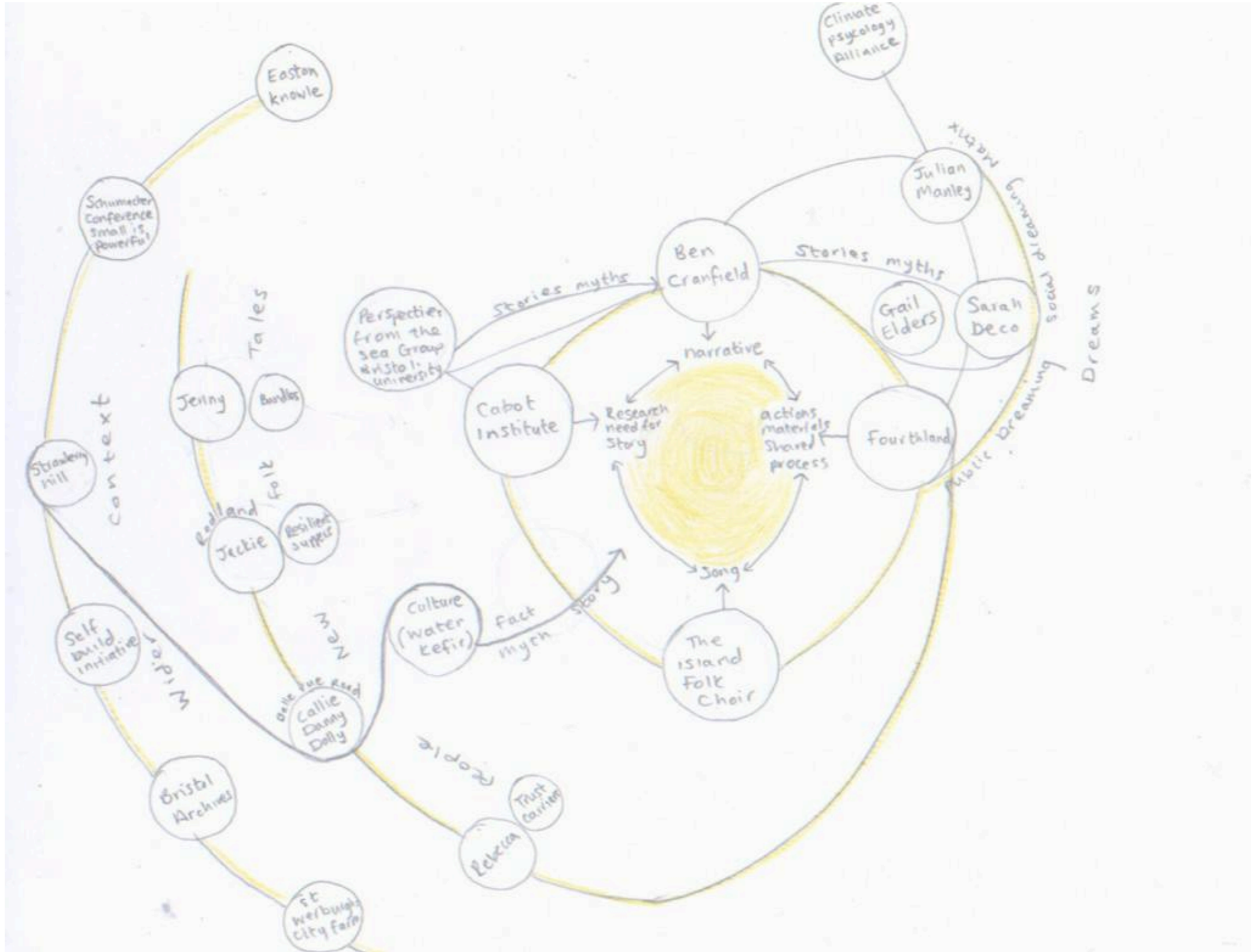
### THE BEGINNINGS OF CULTURE

This narrative became one of the main elements of the work, emerging on our second monthly visit to Bristol. Whilst visiting a women in Easton we noticed that she had a bubbling jar in her kitchen. We ask her what it was, where it had come from and the answer was so wonderful we incorporated it into a conceptual element of the work. The jar contained water kefir, brewed from many small grains given to her by someone she had met. It had been passed on and nurtured. We were told a story of how to care for it and were given some starter grains to take back to London. This culture was handed down and brewed throughout the process, handed out to people in Bristol and served as a drink to visitors during final exhibition and events. We called them 'The Keepers of The Culture'.



Serving the culture, Arnolfini, Bristol 2015





Molecule of Resilience forming through the collaborations



### **THE MOLA MOLA FISH AS ANALOGY TO PROCESS**

We used an analogy of the Mola Mola fish throughout the process as a mechanism to discuss resilience. The Mola Mola, ocean sun fish, moon - fish and millstone fish, lives both at 600 metres deep in the ocean and surfaces at different times to bask in the sun. At these moments the surface of the fish appears like a small island and birds come to feed off its back. This curious fish has been around since the dinosaurs and has an inward growing tail.

To us its behaviour conjured up many images of resilience, arriving from the depths of the unknown, the occasional surfacing where things become clear. The inward growing tail had associations of how we view knowledge - for example, if the fish were not still present we may ascribe it a completely different set of behaviours and may have misjudged it completely based on how it appears. The inward growing tail became a symbol of judgements of community and society - if simply looked at in isolation people may think the tail would not function, however a deeper watching shows that it functions extremely well.

We told the story of the Mola Mola fish at our meetings with all contributors to the project. By telling the qualities of this mystical creature, we wanted to embody the actual substance and potential of resilience and stray away from giving any formal definition. It served as both a myth and as a method of stimulating curiosity. Many people, when told the story, thought it to be entirely fictional and only later realised that it existed.

We had much correspondence throughout the process about the Mola Mola fish, including receiving emails about childhood sightings and current Mola Mola research off the coast of Cornwall.

## PSYCHOANALYSIS EMBODYING THE PROCESS

Resilience and climate change requires a psychological discussion.

From the outset we used a quote from J.G Ballard, *The Drowned World* to frame the work we would do.

*“just as psychoanalysis reconstructs the original traumatic situation in order to release the repressed material, so we are now being plunged back into the archaeopsychic past, uncovering the ancient taboos and drives that have been dormant for epochs...Each one of us is as old as the entire biological kingdom, and our bloodstreams are tributaries of the great sea of its total memory”.*

No ideas happen in isolation from others and it was important in order to understand resilience to seek to understand the essence of ‘collectivity’.

Our approach utilised and experimented with embodying some basic tenets of psychoanalysis including;

1. A person's development is determined by often forgotten events  
*can these events can be remembered?*
2. Human attitude, mannerism, experience, and thought is largely influenced by drives that are rooted in the unconscious  
*what space do we give the unconscious in learning?*
3. It is necessary to bypass psychological resistance in the form of defence mechanisms when bringing drives into awareness  
*to produce open dialogue across practices and knowledge*
4. Conflicts between the conscious and the unconscious, or with repressed material can materialise in the form of mental or emotional disturbances  
*for example: conflicts between groups on a local scale – conflicts with nature and our nature on a global scale*
5. Liberating the elements of the unconscious is achieved through bringing this material into the conscious mind  
*using skilled guidance, specific language and therapeutic process*  
*AND can only be achieved through open cross practice dialogues*

We also considered these principles to include the significance of dreams, the act of dreaming together, and the use of creative methods, encounters with materials and the hand made to stimulate an immediate common ground for unconscious connection and play. These methods facilitated the formation of a resilient community where openness, trust and uncertainty were at the heart of coming together.

## **WORKSHOP WITH CABOT INSTITUTE BRINGING TOGETHER THE NARRATIVES SO FAR COLLECTED WITHIN THE PROCESS**

After a 6 months residency with Cabot Institute and wider group of academics at Bristol University, we put together a workshop for people to come together and explore collected themes. We saw this session to be very much about the idea of listening. To do this, we transformed all the research and knowledge that had been shared with us into a new format which involved participants physically activating the knowledge through a series of simple actions of the hand, in small groups.

The words that were present were read from rolls of baking paper unrolled by two people at a time using rolling pins. On arrival, participants were served the very first collective tasting of 'the beginnings of culture' and the workshop began with the quote "We are all as old as the entire biological kingdom, within each and every one of us is an ancient and a future landscape". A description of the events that followed is written by Amanda Woodman Hardy, The Cabot Institute coordinator.

### **Resilience is inside every one of you – you just have to know where to find it... by Amanda Woodman Hardy**

Fourthland came to the Cabot Institute from London to give a workshop which would help us look into how resilience forms an important part of our research across all disciplines. Walking into the room with weird objects laid out and the sound of an Irish choir repeating a hypnotic chant, I instantly knew this would be a very different kind of exploration of our academic research.

#### **A resilient performance**

Fourthland started their artistic performance by holding a rope and folding it up...cue lots of confused looks around the room and people shifting uneasily in their seats. I couldn't help thinking what on earth have I signed myself up to?! Asking everyone to close their eyes, Fourthland continue to set up the room with props.

Upon opening of eyes, everyone was asked to communicate through gestures and not use their voice. A volunteer was plucked from the room to randomly play a piano whilst participants took hay, eggshells, string and a big dish of what looked like the biggest poppadum I had ever seen - it was actually a flat bowl made from wax. Manipulating all these 'ingredients' separately in small groups by making straw bundles, 'moving mountains' with eggshells, and weaving string in and out and around the room, binding the room together, there was a sense that this had meaning in a way that could not be explained verbally. This is where writing about the experience is tough. What on earth was happening, what did it all mean and where was the relevance to resilience? I couldn't quite see it at that point...

Fourthland continued and read from a scroll rolled up in a rolling pin. The scroll contained all the thoughts of the researchers that had contributed to our resilience programme over the last few weeks. Contributions came from social science, engineering, arts, and the sciences. After all the noise and manipulating of simple materials subsided, a group of volunteers sat at the front of the room (named the 'keepers of culture') reflected on what they thought had just happened.

#### **Digesting the workshop**

Taking the time to digest what had just happened was critically important at this point. We had spent 20 minutes inside this weird bubble of wax and string and sound and eggshells and straw and a whole load of visual and aural bombardments. How was the room making sense of it all? I was intrigued.



Workshop with Cabot Institute and Bristol University, Bristol 2015

First reactions were that lots had happened without actually seeing it. Everyone was so engrossed in their little task with their simple material that they didn't feel like they saw everything that was going on but everyone seemed to *sense* most stuff that was happening around them, regardless of whether they saw it or not. It wasn't until everyone stopped and looked around at the transformation of the room that we all realised just how much we had changed our simple materials and our presence in the room.

Cycling and circles were prominent, connecting everyone – whether it was a circular straw wreath, circles in the eggshells or circles of string around the room.

The people sat around the large wax dish, were told to deconstruct it but ended up remoulding it and building something up instead which demonstrated how resilient we can be. Even if we destroy something, we can still make something out of what remains. The group reflecting on the deconstruction of the wax bowl felt destructive to change it but then this feeling reversed once they realised that the wax warmed in their hands and became quite malleable. The wax group described resilience through beeswax in that it can be remoulded if you hold it in your hand long enough but you can also snap it causing a shock. The snapping led to a remoulding of the wax which seemed like a natural process.

The group who had the straw (four male academics) weren't quite sure why they were creating bundles of straw or where they were going with it but they quickly and quietly started a production line to build a big nest. It felt meaningless to them whilst making the straw bundles but reflecting on it afterwards, they felt that they were creating something new, creating new life, and undertaking the basic processes of being human.

The string group, with a bundle of string and no scissors started by miming cats cradles to each other but then realised that not having scissors meant they had to think more creatively about what they were doing with the string...so they connected everyone in the room up. Once everyone in the room was connected they then turned to making the string look more attractive, embellishing it with knots and some borrowed straw. The string group felt that this process made them question permission e.g. who they could tie up with string, were they allowed to go around the room with the string in the first place? They noticed that there was a bit of risk-taking involved in tying around people and creating trip hazards. In the space of boredom they associated their permissions. No one had said they couldn't do what they were doing, so they just assumed that they could. Thinking about resilience it was interesting to see what permission *allows* you to do but also where it restricts your resilience.

The eggshell groups were told to 'move mountains'. They got into a rhythm of piling up the eggshells to be 'something' and moving them around in a collective action without collective words. One eggshell group found that they had both been working on the same creation but that once they spoke to each other - one was working on creating an 'island' and the other a 'sun'. They had the same collective result even though they weren't working with the same idea. An important lesson – collaboration with people whose ideas or beliefs we don't hold or understand is vitally important for being resilient to whatever life throws at us. It seemed that order was created out of the chaos of those eggshells.

### **Artistic interpretations of resilience**

After hearing peoples general reactions to the performance, Fourthland started to explain the artistic meaning behind the performance. Each of the resources on the table (straw, eggshells, wax, string) were 'scarce' and Fourthland wanted to see how people would be creative whilst the items on the table were running out. The room worked across their academic disciplines by not speaking but creating new things.

Fourthland asked how people would describe the process if we were to tell it again. A silence ensued whilst participants gathered their thoughts. Someone said it was 'child-like', others said it was 'different' and there was audible pleasure in the room emanating from 'giggles'. There was uncertainty about what was being created and people wondered what the story was and what their part was in it.



Workshop with Cabot Institute and Bristol University, Bristol 2015

Fourthland discussed how long the process should have taken. Usually they go for forty minutes and interrupt half way through. This time they went for twenty minutes to see what happened when people knew they had limited time. Reflecting back, knowing that we had limited time to create something from nothing seemed to really kickstart the academics. Knowing that the Cabot Institute academics have it within themselves to work together on issues of resilience around future cities and societies, climate change and sustainable engineering, it made me realise how important this whole process had been. In a way it was life affirming because the work they do now has much more meaning and importance, and allowing creativity of ideas through a collective consciousness is invaluable to the future of humanity.

### **Academic interpretations**

Below are some of the academic interpretations of the resilience workshop, all meaningful and thought provoking:

- One scientist thought the workshop was about the individual stories and that life was precious.
- “It was less about looking for someone else in the room who knew what was happening and more about what I knew”.
- “We took away our human stuff e.g. language and knowledge, and sought an older part of ourselves, like making eye contact in order to make and do and continue”.
- A social scientist asked about cooperation and what happens if something happens that is malign like external shocks? What happens to that group cooperation? If the shock came you would need to know that you can all come together to get over that shock.
- Another point well-made was that there was a whole load of people who weren't in the room. “Every time we try to be resilient we are excluding certain groups”.

### **Future thoughts on resilience**

Fourthland said that the process was all about stories and myths in stories. However one academic counteracted this and said that these myths already exist, for example, in cultures such as Native American Indians and Aborigines. These cultures have passed down ‘myths’ and ‘stories’ generation to generation that will get us through our important global situation. The academic said we shouldn't necessarily create new stories but “listen to the stories that already exist”.

I don't know about anyone else in the room but Fourthland totally blew my mind and I feel rather differently about life and the future of life. It is looking increasingly likely that ours and future generations will have to cope with a more uncertain world as global governments are not pulling their weight with regards to environmental policies and regulations around emissions, climate change, environmental degradation and more. But the resilience that lies inside every one of us and the innate capacity that we have to work together even when we have nothing in common gives me much hope for the future.



## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH PERIOD AND PUBLIC PROGRAM

Uncertainty and community are very closely knit. Uncertainty and the unknown often serve to bring together a community in a shared action. This shared action is somehow understood even if the exact reason for communing, if asked, is not linguistically clear. Thus the reason for communing continues to remain uncertain.

It is uncertain yet it is strong. The challenge arises when ascribing factual language to this sensation of coming together or 'instituting', as factual language often obscures the haptic sense. If we seek to remove uncertainty from systems we can limit chances to build other types of communities, limiting our observations on what communities actually do and how they function.

We came to think of resilience and resiliency as being about this ability to open to others, to institute and listen openly in order to learn deeply from each other.

In this state of resilient listening, it appears that each individual goes through a process of uncertainty wherein they activate other aspects of themselves, not immediately on the surface. We wondered if these activated qualities are something from what Ballard referred to as... "*Each one of us is as old as the entire biological kingdom, and our bloodstreams are tributaries of the great sea of its total memory*".

Thus the resilience we are searching for is already within us and perhaps needs to surface to be expressed in a way that is at once old and entirely new. These thoughts shaped the idea to use the art works we would make to situate the gallery as a way of stimulating poetic and uncertain communing.

This concept in collaboration with Ben Cranfield became the title for the show; "back to where we have not quite been".



back to where we have not quite been, 35 mm photograph

**OUTCOMES - WHAT WE MADE IN RESPONSE**  
**SONGS, STORIES, OBJECT, ELDERS, IMAGE AND TEXT**

**Song**

A song based on collected texts from the Cabot researchers and people encountered throughout the process interspersed with the story of the Mola Mola fish.

This song was developed as a musical collaboration with Polly Wilde and the Island Folk Choir. On our first arrival to the choir practice we brought with us the story and some of our objects used within the process to stimulate a deep response and embodiment of the content. This then manifested through the voices of the choir and before we knew it, we were immersed in the research and knowledge in an entirely different format, one that seemed both ancient and timeless. We continued our visits to the choir and each time as we communed through the song, ideas of 'the resiliency of the voice' grew stronger towards the development of the 4 - day lab.

We later brought a recording of this song back to The Cabot Institute to be used as part of a workshop. The song was finally performed live around the Mola fish on the opening night at the Arnolfini and has now become part of the choir's repertoire of songs.



Opening night performance, The Island Folk Choir sing the Mola Mola song around the central sculpture piece, Arnolfini 2015

## Stories

A collection of New Folk stories were written based on encounters throughout the project, many of which occurred through an encounter with our performative gestures, put in place to stimulate curiosity from passing public. Through these stories we wanted to re-situate the use of language to capture the essence of the exchanges within the process, and through the story format ascribing a value and an afterlife to them. Characters in the stories included “the gold haired lady” and the “the bosom of the earth”, both of whom came to the opening event and found themselves reciting the story of the encounter next to the relevant objects. These stories were subsequently performed and read by invigilators as storytellers throughout the exhibition.

As a response to these stories, which we read to Sarah Deco throughout the process, she responded to the ideas and collated a selection of 3 mythical stories to read as part of the later conference event.



Sarah Deco, story of ‘the invisible beings of land and sea’ during conference event, Arnolfini 2015

## Object

Many objects were produced to form a series of archetypal gestures and tell the underlying stories collected throughout the process, objects included:

### Carrier pieces

These pieces were made from recycled newspaper, which we collected from the many discarded piles around London. We wanted to reshape this language of widespread and disposed information that daily circulate our urban environments. Through literally reforming the material into something physical like an ancient bowl or a bucket, we engaged in a series of ‘carrying acts’ provoking both an openness and curiosity in passers by. “What are you carrying?” people would ask us. This unusual question triggered the people themselves to offer a us story or a bit of ‘what they were carrying’.

These pieces, embodying our ideas of ‘handheld knowledge’ were also brought along to meetings with researchers at the Cabot Institute and Bristol University, where they ended up acquiring a function of mental models of which to ascribe their research.



New land, Arnolfini 2015

### **New land**

This piece, a large embroidered surface, consisted of many small bundles of straw hand stitched on to hessian.

Throughout the process, whilst in London, we sat on the street with a big pile of straw carefully shifting hand woven trays between us, rolling tiny bundles of straw, one by one, and tying them with string. Sharing both scissors and string through a passing gesture, the bundles could only be rolled with a certain tempo, creating a slow and rhythmic growth. Whilst continuously humming the hum of the mola song chorus, people from all cultures and lands approached us there on the street, offering a hand, a cup of tea or encouraging comments. "Keep up the good work" they said. "What are you making?" they asked. And before answering, they told us "I know what you are making" and shared stories from their many different homelands, everyone from Eritrea to Poland, connecting with the act as part of their own culture.

As the bundles formed and the stories grew, we started stitching these bundles of encounters onto a joint surface, forming what we call the 'new land' leaving an unstitched space on a roll for further expansion. The humming sound from the process also appeared every 15 min during the exhibition, echoing throughout the galleries and down into the reception as people entered the building.



Mola Mola, Arnolfini 2015

### **Mola Mola fish**

This piece, the physical manifestation of the mythical creature that had surfaced throughout the process, acted as a centre piece between the sun and the moon, to gather around throughout the 4 day exhibition and event at Arnolfini.

The piece was made from thick hand-stitched layers of hessian, which was then smoked over a fire, weathered and wetted, waxed and marked and finally embroidered with the finest of threads. Covering its surface were the 'many mouths' or barnacle like objects, all made from recycled newspaper, individually painted, lacquered and stitched, symbolising 'a recovery of language'.

We created a surface to remind us of something ancient but also of a new potential. The many mouths of the many exchanges throughout the process, its rough surface describing a resilient process similar to one described to us by one of the scientists through his handling of a piece of driftwood we handed to him in a bundle. The surface also gestures the idea of an island and an anchoring within an environment of uncertainty, in this case 'the huge sea of the unconscious.'

Throughout the events at the Arnolfini, the fish had offerings given to it, was sung and gathered around, hosted stories and servings of culture and finally a larger gathering and discussion as a conference.

### Third Space surface

This piece, made from felted natural wool and fibres, silk embroidery, wax and hessian, was one of our responses to the 'reconstruction of ancient landscapes', which was demonstrated to us through rock samples and a lab visit with Richard Pancost, director of Cabot Institute.

The piece's associations to mountains, rivers, a bird and the sun also created a 'dreamscape' to lie upon, here to collectively experience the sounds produced by activating some of the objects in the exhibition within a 'Public Dreaming' workshop. After collectively experiencing the sound and the materiality of the surface, participants were invited to share their experiences and collective associations.

This surface also gesturing the idea of Winnicott's Third Space or the space in between, became a place for a new type of gathering and story, with different and enriched ways of listening to and learning from one another.

The conference finalised here with a story told by Sarah Deco. All conference participants seated on this surface, young and old and some without shoes, seemingly went beyond time and place to a place many called 'home'.



Ancient landscape, Third space, Arnolfini 2015



The passing performance, as part of Handed down Handled opening night, Arnolfini 2015

### **Elders**

On the opening night of the exhibition, 'The Passing', based on our collaboration and dialogue with artist Gail Barker, initiated the space as part of an evening of performance Handed down and Handled marking the start of the 4 day conversation about 'resilience'.

A 620 metre chord in the shape of a ball, knitted by Gail over 18 months, was slowly unravelled between the wise hands of 15 elders, including our own mothers. isik at one end of the unravelling and knutsdotter at the other end reforming the ball, hosted the tensions and rhythms of the collective motion as the onlookers experienced this silent but potent gesture of time and life. A visitor referred to it as a 'life line'. A life line that initially seemed like an eternity and almost unbearable, filling the room with tension and surrender, to finally encompass the entire room of visitors in a large circle all passing the chord between their hands, to finally end with the ball reformed, a moment another visitor described as 'apocalyptic joy'.

This performance was also shared as a subtle video piece in the exhibition, a close up and repeating projection of the old hands passing between them the knitted chord.

We felt the sharing of this performance, its time and the presence of elders, was vital to set off the discussion on resilience in the Arnolfini, acknowledging the wisdom of our elders and the important placement of that knowledge in our current time.



**Image**

An image was produced based on the title of the show and overarching concepts of the work. This image captures the idea of going 'back to where we have not quite been', depicted through a misty landscape displaying the vulnerable beauty of uncertainty or the unknown, and our placement within it.

The image was also used to animate the objects and reveal the performativity of the process.

**Text**

In response to the ideas within the project various texts were written. These include:

Resilience and the Mythic, written by Sarah Deco

Back to where we have not quite been, written by Ben Cranfield

Resilience: The power of being bored....together, written by Hayley Shaw

## Resilience and the Mythic, by Sarah Deco

Re-acquainting ourselves with the timeless, universal world of myth may seem to be the opposite of what's required when facing the very contemporary problem of climate change. But the transformation we face represents such a sea change in how we understand our identity as a species, such a deep and overwhelming re-orientation, that heading into the world of folktales, myths and wonder-tales, is more than just a comforting diversion.

The prospect of climate change, challenges us humans to look very deeply at who we are. It requires us to re-calibrate our collective compass. Transformations on the level we're facing, as far beyond the everyday as they can possibly be, cannot be encompassed by ordinary thinking and states of mind; we need to go to the most fundamental and profound level we can; we need to look towards the bedrock on which human culture is based, to look for where the cultural 'stem-cells' live that define how a society grows and develops. Potential doors to this level are the universals of human experience: sensory and tactile experience, music and storymaking.

Myths, fairy tales, and wonder-tales can evoke what Martin Shaw calls 'Bone memory'; and the telling of and listening to such stories, evokes a particular state of being.

"This is participation mystique. This is a time-wrestle; when as a teller you know things you should not know, bear witness to the moment where the horses of past, present and future all drink from the deep trough." (1)

The call for a 'new story' by Thomas Berry, catholic priest and 'Ecotheologian' has become a rallying cry for many; as has the idea that there is an underlying narrative at a cultural level, which is responsible for the destructiveness of our behaviour. This is sometimes interpreted to mean that one new overarching story needs to be found, a new myth that we can all live by.

But it is, I believe, not the wrong narrative that is the problem, but the shallowness of our engagement with narrative, the loss of story diversity, and the loss of contact with the 'mythic' realm itself.

To draw on a Permaculture analogy, the single narrative, or new story represents something like a mono-culture, whereas what's needed is a forest garden, a diverse, resilient, multilayered community of stories alive with possibilities for cross pollination.

This shallow engagement has caused us to lose our skill and adeptness at engaging with story at its mythic level. If we lose our powers of discrimination about stories, forget how to recognise the true or the 'pseudo', we become prone to being swept along by a 'pseudo myth' that promises much but offers very little. "We think we tell stories, but stories often tell us, tell us to love or to hate, to see or to be blind.....The task of learning to be free requires learning to hear them...." (2)

A corpus of stories passed down in an oral tradition is usually in the form of a lattice, an interweaving body of connected stories, which present multiple pathways and possibilities. This kind of storytelling, which has composted down over generations, is multi-layered, and often puzzling, allowing a hint or glimpse of a mystery beyond.

The telling of stories such as ancient myths or wonder-tales, is a collective undertaking. The teller and the listeners create something together in the space between them. This opens the door to an experience of profound collective understanding; a transformative experience of deep collective awe or 'communitas' to use the anthropologist Victor Turner's term.

The ancient world it seems understood the need for rituals of this kind to enable communities to connect deeply and evolve, becoming more than the sum of their parts, weaving a matrix of symbolic understanding out of which the shared emergent reality could begin to take form. The problems of climate change require a level of collaboration and collective decision making the like of which has never been demanded of us before. Our mythic story heritage has much to offer here.

The new world dawning, one in which we come to full awareness of just how much damage we have done, is as yet largely unexplored. While the planet runs out of uncharted places, we have created a whole new undiscovered landscape called... the future.

We will do almost anything it seems, to avoid taking an imaginative step into this new landscape. We continue to believe that what's to come will be acted out in an environment very much like the one we're accustomed to. We now know that this will not be so; we know and yet it seems we don't know, because our actions do not reflect that knowledge.

We have to explore it, this painful territory, we have to reveal and face its realities, its wastelands and devastated areas. Our chances of psychological survival in this future will depend on the quality and quantity of these explorations, these expeditions into the unknown. Unless we familiarise ourselves with this land and face it squarely; creating new paths across it, telling stories about it, envisioning and visualising it in as many different ways as possible; it will remain

2

'unthinkable' and the probability is that then, when its reality bites, we will just not be able to bear it.

Creating new paths across the unexplored future requires storytellers of every kind to engage in depth with the mythic. It needs artists film-makers, writers, and visionaries of all varieties to spin tales across the void, weaving together old and new narratives to create a new (and old) resilience.

- . 1) Martin Shaw, West Country School of Myth Blog: Curating Echoes
- . 2) Rebecca Solnit, The Faraway Nearby

## Back To Where We Have Not Quite Been, some response to a listening event by Fourthland, by Ben Cranfield

**Grandmother's knowledge.** A deep stirring knowledge. A handed-down knowledge. A cut and paste, glued and fastened knowledge: yellowing, annotated, borrowed, gathered and hidden. A knowledge of materials, a material knowledge. Preserve, conserve, re-use and repair. Hang-it, draw-it, pluck-it, store-it, fold it, wind-it, peel-it, core-it, wrap-it, steam-it. Talk about it, write it down, publish it – why not? Record and transmit, but always handle with care, never take for granted, not in vain. Not to own, only to borrow, carry for a while, pass-on. To be sliced and shared. Loaves and fishes, oranges and lemons, tea and sympathy, round-about-a-pound-a-week. Add a pinch to a mixture, make a wish with a stir; beat with a wooden one, fold with a metal one. Worldly wisdom is hard to come by and easily buried, with letters and formula. Buried not gone. And should Alexandria be burnt again the ashes will fertilize the soil in which the tubas of experience are softly held and from which shoots, like sign-posts in the desert of ignorance, will emerge.

The **Museum of Lost Process** does not have glass cases, interpretation panels or visitor surveys. Skills are not learnt, they are found. There is no History here, only tales-told, times-when, memories-of. Rough-ragged, lightly-rolled, exquisitely-hewn, these are congealings of nature-culture, insect-mouthed, finger-and-thumbed. A process is lost to be found again. Hands and mouths move silently in the shadows of history.

**Home** is where we arrive to. We started from another place full of givens, of course, off course. I got a train, she took her bike, making our way through the city using devices that make good-passages from bad. And why? A promise? Perhaps. A commitment and professional interest, a conviction and an idea that you had long ago that one should not always know why or what or how. Because you said 'yes', because you always say 'yes', or too often say 'no'. For the love of God. God! For love? A sense of something bigger, not already accounted for, chalked-up, impact-defined, books-balanced. Where I come from, where you come from, they are like this, we are like that. A place, yes, given to us, assigned to us, a starting point over which we had no control. But a home? Surely not. We arrive at a home, temporary, imagined, nomadic, but a home none-the-less. The child who can play is able to overcome the irrevocable gap between inner and outer realities. Creativity is the freedom to illusion and disillusion the world. Finding ourselves at home we trust ourselves to play – picking out a sound, picking up an object – folding over a word, folding out an idea. I travelled bundled in expectations, tied with labels, already placed in hopes of finding somewhere, no-place, where I could untie the knot of ownership and unfold in common. Home at last.

How do you lose yourself? How do you find yourself? In the moment of encounter we must choose; choose whether to accept or refuse the radical transformation of the encounter. A sound so familiar that it is totally foreign. A sensing of bodies, animate and inanimate, noisy and silent. Do we accept these **beings, soundings, movings, stirrings**? Do we become one with the affective field, knowing that we must give up the certainty of our selfhood? Or do we resist, say, 'yes, I know that and that and this'. Listen for the bell. A crisp call to consciousness that places us back. Back where? Back where we have not quite been, in a space that is not quite the same. A gift has been offered, on the one condition, that you are able to receive it. Not so easily done. This is where it begins.

Opening a mouth: silence. These sounds, whose are these? Sounds cannot be owned – even the most private sounds echo through us to be caught as vibrations by another ear. **Lost words** are found again in a different key, resonating with new meaning in a fresh mind. What if all those words were misplaced, all the labels in the museum brushed away by an over-zealous cleaner who wished to keep the objects free from the dulling dust of language? I lost my words, as she had done on a night when dream became more important than waking conscious desires. Forgiving, forgetting, forgiving, forgetting. Forewords, all forwards. The words that frame, that tether and tie. Undo the bundle let the words fall away. But not so we can mouth forever in silence, but so we can find words again and hear them like the timely ring of a bell with clarity. Word-objects, object-words unfolding their meaning like a ground on which to play.

## **Resilience: The power of being bored...together, by Hayley Shaw**

Louise and Eva belong to a London-based arts programme called Fourthland, which they describe as “A movement. An idea. A place. The handheld. A way of working. A history of projects”. I’ve had the pleasure of working with them since Tessa Fitzjohn, a local curator, and Aldo Rinaldi, the Senior Arts Officer at Bristol City Council offered us the opportunity to host Fourthland as artists in residence. Together, Aldo and Tessa launched the ‘Resilience Laboratory’ in light of Bristol’s ‘Green Capital’ award – a project that aimed to explore the meaning of resilience from multiple disciplines and create a space to share learning.

Whenever I meet with Louise and Eva it feels like something profound has just happened, and is about to happen again, if I can only grasp the thoughts for long enough. They have provided a place and a time for us to stop. Think. And dwell on what it means to be resilient. The next few paragraphs are an attempt to capture just one of the many themes I found surprising and interesting at Fourthland’s most recent resilience workshop at the Cabot Institute – boredom (the good kind).

I have never (ever) considered boredom as a precursor to resilience, but yesterday I did. When you consider the amount of work we need to do to mitigate the effects of climate change, or tackle inequality and hunger, it’s difficult to argue that we should ever move so slowly that there’s time to be bored. The scale of the challenge is so vast that those who truly engage in the topic can almost be consumed by a constant need for progress.

In yesterday’s workshop we were set a task to work with simple materials – wax, hay, string, and eggshell – in silence. We weren’t given strict instructions on how to use the materials; just that they were ours, and we had twenty minutes to work together using silent gestures. What we learnt is that each group started the task politely – exploring the materials and gently negotiating how they might be used. We were delicate, patient, and searching for rules that might guide our behaviour. We all seemed to feel that there might be actions that weren’t ‘allowed’. After what must have been around 10 minutes there was a surge of creativity. People had become bored with their ‘safe’ tasks and began to be more provocative – breaking materials, tying furniture together, making meaningful products, or reading aloud. In this space, boredom became a catalyst for a change greater than we originally felt comfortable with. We stopped searching for rules and broke the ones we thought existed. Colleagues overcame their discomfort of physical contact, and began to share materials across their workspace. Boredom forced us to create and connect.

In the post-event analysis, Louise, Eva and I discussed the possible importance of boredom in resilience and I was taken aback by their ideas. They suggest; “when we are bored, we are seeking something – something stimulating, something interesting. In this state, we become more receptive to learning.” Shima Beiji has previously argued that in order for an agent to become resilient, it must undergo a continuous process of knowledge acquisition and learning. Is boredom a condition that makes us more receptive to learning?

Perhaps, but it’s possible that we’re also open to a different kind of learning. It’s not the reductionist type of analysis that takes place after a disaster (where did the issue originate, what specifically could we have done to make it better, how can we be more resilient next time?) It’s a far more emergent way of creating understanding that intuitively feels more innovative and preventative.

If we took more time to be bored and engage in mindless repetitive tasks, could we actually be far more mindful in the present, more creative, and more resilient in the future?

In the scientific and engineering literature, it is clear that a degree of ‘redundancy’ in a system is critical for resilience. This means having additional resources or capacity that allow you to absorb shocks without compromising productivity or safety (e.g. having a store cupboard full of beans in a food shortage will mean you can avoid hunger). It seems to me that there’s a link between boredom and redundancy.

If boredom arises (in part) from repeating a task beyond the point that we can learn more from it, or enjoy it, then is boredom a form of mental 'redundancy'? Does it give us time to absorb the mental 'shock' of constantly receiving new information every day?

I repeatedly hear people say they crave 'time to really think' away from the daily slog of tasks, but have realised that when we create this space it's often for a defined purpose: "Think through new paper ideas - 2 hours", or "send thoughts on strategy document to Rich - 30 mins". Very rarely do we schedule time for unadulterated, unstructured and exploratory learning.

So what did I learn from playing with a bowl of wax this afternoon? That in order for people and communities to become resilient, we need time to be unproductive, together. That boredom can be a precursor, maybe even a catalyst, to a different kind of creation, connection and learning. That we need to trust that the use of this time will surpass our initial expectations. And that I want to work with more artists like Eva and Louise.



### FINAL LAB EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAM ARNOLFINI

Resilience LAB concluded with hosting a four-day exhibition and event program at the Arnolfini in Bristol titled, back to where we have not quite been. The installation was based around the concepts developed through the public program. The elements in the final installation resonated with each part of the process; something given, reformed, borrowed and something archetypal. Linking with psychoanalysis, the rooms of the gallery were divided into 'Land' (The Conscious), Sea (The Unconscious) and Third Space (The space of potential).

The program brought ideas of uncertainty and myth into the events, mixing rational, expected and factual, with curious, imaginary and ambiguous. The set up was presented without explanation text. Instead we arranged for the invigilators of the exhibition to act as 'storytellers', at intervals interspersing the space with oral fragments and tales. This allowed audience and visitors to be presented with ambiguity and uncertainty, which then prompted the freedom to form their own narratives about the work. Rather than the work being 'viewed by viewers' we wanted to create a space where 'people experienced' the work as it is precisely this experience and awakening of the senses that often get left out of dialogues on social progress

Some narratives collected from visitors:

"An experience of Doggerland. An area of land that now lies beneath the North Sea, and originally connected Britain to mainland Europe during and after the last Ice Age. It was a place of rich rituals, the Mesolithic period and rising sea levels gradually reduced it to low-lying islands before its final destruction, perhaps following a tsunami"

"A journey in a coracle"

"A history that is not history at all, instead it is something of the present"

"A consideration of nation, status and then dissolving in to myth"

"A mirror of our relationship to nature, the ebbs and flows, inter - connectedness"

Narratives on the opening performance included:

"After the initial tension came apocalyptic joy"

"We were all so aware of our part in the whole, the responsibility of that part"

"How fleeting is our time"



Installation view, sea room Arnolfini 2015





Installation view, sea room Arnolfini 2015



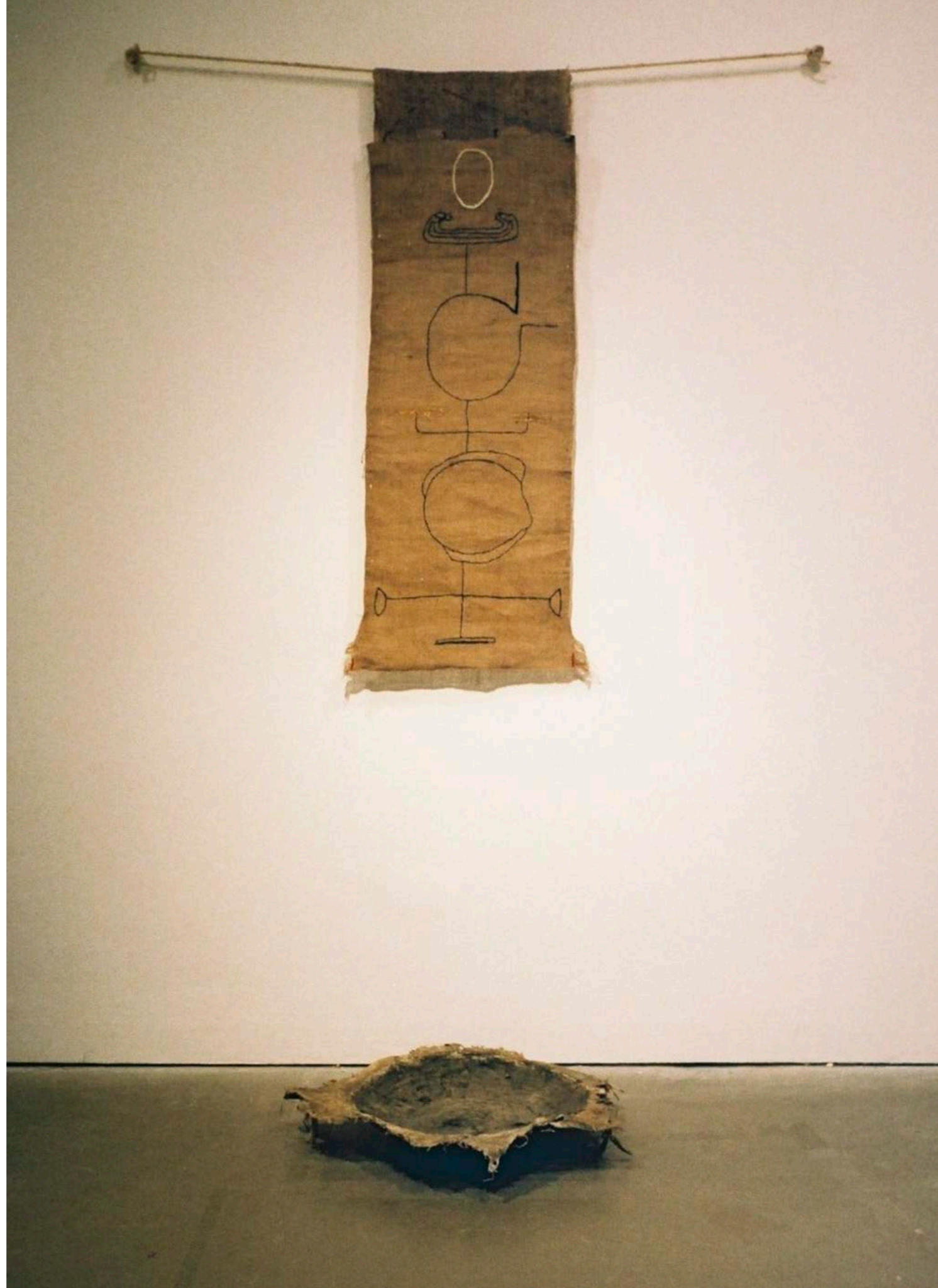
Installation view and visitor, sea room Arnolfini 2015



Installation view, Land room Arnolfini 2015



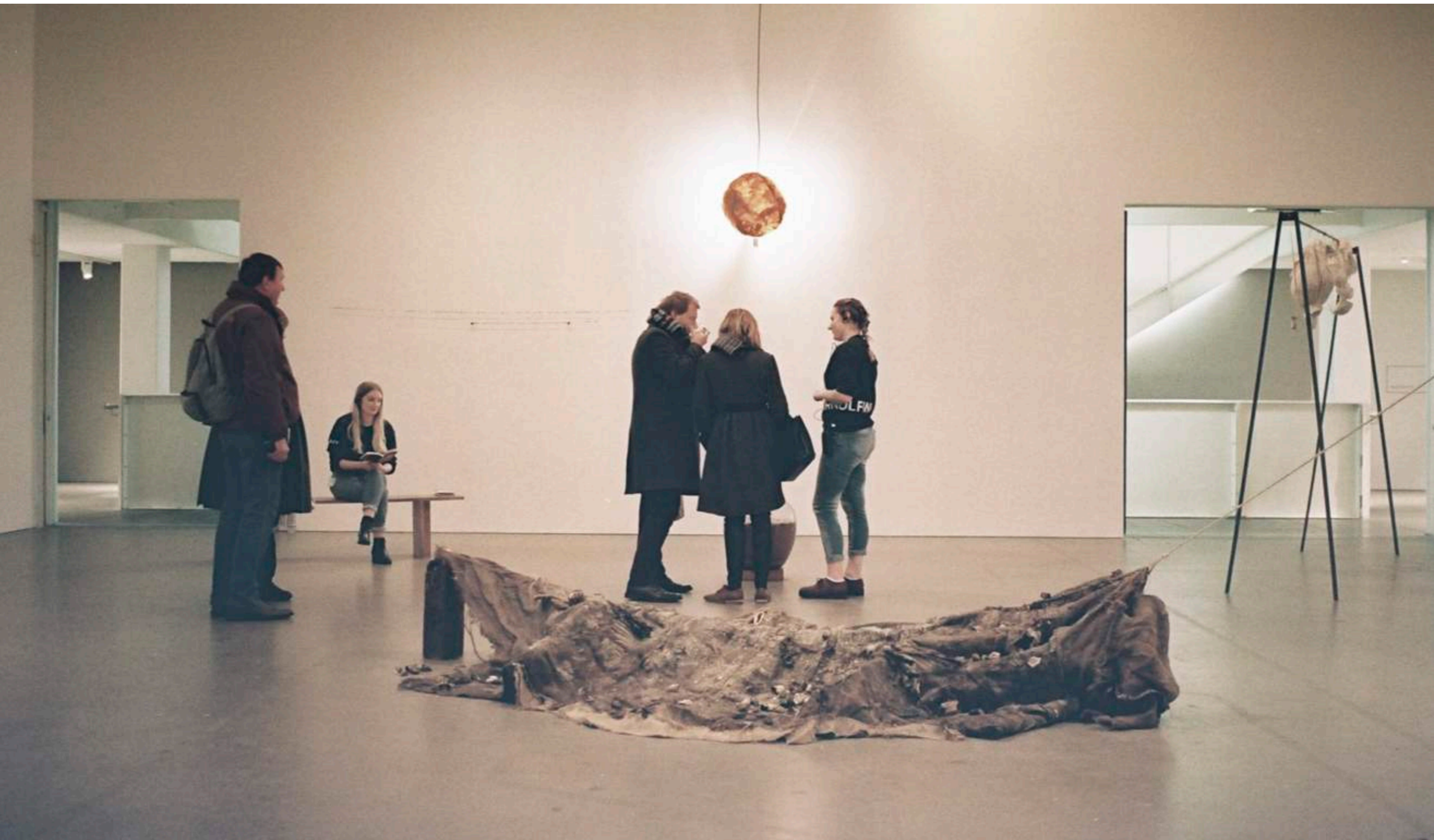
The Island Folk Choir, as part of Handed down and Handled performance, opening night Arnolfini 2015



Installation view, Land space Arnolfini 2015



The Passing, as part of Handed down and Handled performance, opening night, Arnolfini 2015



Installation view and visitors 'sampling the beginnings of culture', Arnolfini 2015



Installation view and visitors, land room Arnolfini 2015





New land and visitor, land room Arnolfini 2015



back to where we have not quite been conference, Arnolfini 2015



back to where we have not quite been' conference, Arnolfini 2015





Constructed by many mouths, Sunday Song, The Island Folk Choir, Arnolfini 2015

## THE THREADS THAT CONTINUE, CONFERENCE EVENT

On the third day of the exhibition, we hosted a conference around the Mola Mola fish and within the installation. This event used the artwork as a point of meeting to subliminally shape the discussions that took place around it. The format of the conference itself included notions of 'uncertainty' and 'external influence', allowing other visitors of the space to interrupt, join in or pass through as the day went on. Through these elements, presenting the gathering with an atmosphere of resiliency and establish an early on potential for how the group could form throughout the event.

The conference revealed some of the narratives and performative occurrences throughout the residency process with both the Cabot Institute and with other collaborators. Greeted with a glass of 'the beginnings of culture' the day began its trail.

Opening the event was a collaborative action and performance with people from the Cabot Institute and Bristol University. This performance, echoing the previously held Cabot workshop, presented the conference participants instantly with a format of uncertainty and roles of 'capturing' what was experienced. This was all followed by a discussion.

Included in the conference were arrivals and presenters from the group itself. These contributors upon a sound would appear with their contributions throughout the day. One of these was a reading of repeated words overlaying a video projection of a previous fragment of 'The Passing', showing 30 elders unravelling and reforming the knitted ball, now in the galleries between their hands. This was followed by thoughts and reflections from performance participants.

Intersecting each sequence was Sarah Deco's 3 mythical stories, accompanied by the subtle sounds of her shruti box. As the group moved into the more intimate space for the storytelling, previous discussions dissolved and left the group immersed in youth and curiosity.

A letter from someone absent, but yet very present, concluded the last discussion, giving us his gifts of words for our mouths to speak. It became a borrowed and embodied archive of our collective thoughts, which seemed to have merged across practices, time and space.

### **Themes that emerged within the discussion**

The role of the feminine  
Care and hands  
Recovery of language  
Time and production  
The welsh word 'Hiraeth'  
Openness and tension  
The mythical and the rational  
Politics and Politic  
Institution and Instituting  
Wisdom and knowing  
The potentiality of uncertainty  
Labour

The format of the day allowed opposing narratives to sit side by side, equally playing their parts within the wider discussion. The conference presented a methodology as content rather than a fixed narration. Towards the very end of the gathering, a different type of group seemed to have formed, one we could have never expected or describe, but yet one of strength and warmth, transformative in its new shape, we all left with this feeling and a series of new thoughts and threads.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF VISUAL MATRIX AS EVALUATION

Resilience and resiliency as an action has deeper significance than the word 'resilient'. A similar complexity also exist when measuring the impacts of art. In order for the evaluation to capture some of this complexity we invited Julian Manley to carry out a visual matrix. This final reflection session provided an opportunity to creatively think about the wider meanings and feelings, impacts and associations of 'resilience'. The session encouraged a shared visual and imaginative thinking to make links with the objects and occurrences within the show and things encountered throughout the project.

### REPORT

#### **Fourthland's Back to where we have not quite been.**

**Reflections on the Visual Matrix held in the Reading Room of the Arnolfini, 15.00 - 17.00, 29.11.15 (Julian Manley)**

The visual matrix provided another Winnicottian 'potential space' echoing or mirroring that of the Third Space gallery in the exhibition. The space of the visual matrix gathered together the untold affect of visitors to the exhibition and other experiences that formed part of the exhibition. These are the experiences that go beyond the 'seeing' of an object and towards participation in experience: with others, with space and time, with the artworks.. "Resilience' therefore is not manifest in the works; it awaits its creation in the potential space through the transformative objects that are also the processes of the artworks and projects; resilience is neither signifier nor signified. Resilience, if it exists at all, if it was ever stimulated or invited to grow in the artistic experience of the visitors is something within: in the visitor, in the artwork. The 'innermost' nature of this resilience is not easily defined. It was the purpose of the visual matrix to seek out its traces where they might be lying low, from where they might be tempted to emerge, maybe from deep within a cave where image and language coexist in a hand imprint, where the hand is the creator of transformative objects.

#### **Beyond language**

The imprint of the hand in the cave speaks to this questioning of words, signifiers, where the making of things or the making of experiences are brought back to the hand, reminding us of the tactile nature of the artworks, of the passing of a cord, itself knitted by hand, through the hands of people thus joined by their hands and also able to let go of that joining and to feel both a sense of belonging and loss at the same time. This image was developed in that of the hand imprint in an ice cave where many visitors had placed their warm hands on the same spot, the same hand imprint of a predecessor, creating a deeper and deeper hand image boring through the ice. Creativity is connected here with intent to join with others and to understand this warmth as something similar to what is warm and alive and creative in human beings.

#### **Relationships: nature, artworks and people**

There were further images of ice and snow: the biggest icicle you can find preserved in the freezer, the snowball also in the freezer ready to be taken out in the summer. The process of transformation from solid state to liquid form, reminding us of the wax in some of the artworks on display; echoes of Andy Goldsworthy's ice sculptures being mentioned in the matrix, reminding us of the relationship between art and nature. Although the works by Fourthland are not *about* nature, they are intimately organic *in* nature.

#### **A reflection on what lives and is living**

The matrix was preoccupied with a large number of different animals, providing a range of connections and recognition of the interconnectivity of living beings. Human beings, except through the presence of hands, were notably absent, but aspects of the human were emphasised through the interconnectivity of the matrix as a potential space. For example, mention was made of the emotional qualities of elephants who mourn for their dead; the many different aspects of goats were mentioned, ranging from connections to Pan, the devil and childhood memories of connecting with them in a childhood park. The multitude of meanings and perspectives provided the matrix with a sense of diversity, maybe also alluding to the loss of this bio-diversity in our world.

The matrix emphasised the value of this animal kingdom (and therefore the danger of its loss) by making interesting allusions to the evolutionary process, by including images of fish developing feet for fins and transforming into land creatures through evolution. This brought to mind the depth of our connection with transformation, or the activity of creation that includes transformation in the potential or Third Space of the exhibition.

### **Dry land, soil and water**

In connection to this image and with reference to the image of a 'fish' in the exhibition, it was noted that despite the 'earthy' colours of the artworks and the dryness implied in some of the striking materials, such as straw, evoked in the matrix, there was reference to water images and some other sense of colour, in particular blue. It may be that perception of absence of water in the exhibition, or liquid as represented in solid wax - another important material used in the artworks - made for an unconscious welling up of watery and water-colour images in the minds of the participants in the matrix. In the piece in the exhibition that alluded to a fish, the watery world had to be created by the visitors to the exhibition. This points to the transformative power of the objects to create images in the mind as necessary correlates to the artworks, thus emphasising the essential relationship and connectivity between the visitor to the exhibition and the artworks. Furthermore, the sense of a basic connectivity with our environment is reiterated in this way.

### **Farms, countryside, landscapes and lost utopias**

The matrix made reference to a simple life past, some of which directly emerged from the exhibition, beginning with a reference to straw, images of making food products, with allusions to the 'raisins' in the exhibition and the explicitly hand-made nature of many of the artworks. This also led to further images of farms, fields, and images of a general and beneficent nature that felt at times idealised and at other times as belonging to a childhood past, combined with feelings of nostalgia. There were no mentions of urban life and none of technology, as if the exhibition had stimulated a movement to some simpler past or even some primal state where modern trappings of life were irrelevant. There were some mentions of churches and very ancient structures, such as the pyramids and neolithic constructions. These appeared to be in some way transcendental or at least 'important' places where some forms of transformation - spiritual in the church, from life to the after-life in the pyramid and through interaction with the movement of the sun in the 'neolithic construction - might take place, indicating perhaps the role that the Fourthland exhibition might have had in the 'white cube' of the Arnolfini. As we have seen above, this sense was linked to animal life and some sort of recognition of essential aspects of life. It was suggested that this might have been somewhat romanticised, but nevertheless, the power and insistence of the images in the matrix was notable and untainted by ironies or sarcasms in relation to this matrix-created natural world. In the space of the matrix, at least, this 'romanticised' world was possible and therefore 'real'.

### **Resilience**

The concept of resilience is nuanced as expressed in the visual matrix and through the artworks. It was suggested in the matrix that resilience could be linked to an inner strength gathered by experiencing a sense of primal connection and simple, essential connection with our creativity and a knowledge and acknowledgment of our inseparable interconnectivity with our environment: with the land and the sea and the living world of creatures. By giving this a value that goes beyond the 'modern trappings of life', we are able to bolster this inner strength - through knowledge gained through experience, and through 'making' with our hands - and be more resilient to the challenges that we face as a people and as members of a planetary eco-system.

### **Conclusions**

The visual matrix spoke of

- A place we are going to, which in the uncertain ambivalence of the artwork and the matrix is also a call back from somewhere.
- There is a feeling of having lost touch with something essential
- Resilience equated with a 'simple' lifestyle and something deeper within
- The importance of sense is emphasised
- The importance of the action of making and creating, repeating and transforming
- Resilience is the capacity to be able to deal with uncertainty/ambiguity and change as in transformation
- We are reminded of the gifts of the earth, a recognition of precious things and an acknowledgment of care



## GESTURES AND FORMS

The collaborative process lead us to develop works and objects that built on embedded narratives. All objects and processes within the show worked with exploring the following gestures...

Openness, Uncertainty, Trust, Hand Made, The Feminine, Handheld, Curiosity, Careful, Imbued surface, Labours, Gifts, Reclaiming and Recovery

## THE FORMATION OF A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

The project created a community of practice, shared ideas and understanding. The openness and trust expressed by each person in the whole served as an act of resiliency. This openness was passed on and around. The community, that was held in the minds of the whole, joined together during the opening event, Handed down and Handled.



Handed down and Handled, opening night performance, Arnolfini 2015



I travelled with bundles, sculpture Arnolfini 2015

### LEGACY OF THE WORK

The process and event series captivated audiences from a range of disciplines. Enabling them to come together and share ideas. It has left a legacy of learning for each of us. Within the Cabot Institute and Bristol University, it has formed ideas of new ways of doing things. For the Island Folk Choir, a deep realisation of the strength of their voices. For all collaborators, the project promoted a deeper appreciation for the value of artist process. For many audience members and participants the project was the first time they engaged with artists and took part in gallery events and even visited a gallery. It has left traces of the benefits of the handmade, the handheld and the value of openness.

The focus and success of the work has been to build numerous multi-disciplinary collaborations, which is reflected in the range of outcomes and number of direct collaborators. During the final days in the gallery, grains of culture were given out to people who had been involved sending the 'beginnings of culture' in new directions.

All collaborators have expressed a desire to continue to develop work together.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND COLLABORATIONS

Dr Ben Cranfield, Birkbeck University

Sarah Deco, Group Analyst, Psychotherapist and storyteller

Dr Julian Manley, psychosocial researcher

Gail Barker, Artist

### **Cabot Institute Direct collaborations**

Haley Shaw, Cabot Manager

Richard Pancost, Professor Biogeochemistry and Director of Cabot Institute

Jitendar Agarwal, Department of Civil Engineering - Senior Lecturer in Structural Engineering Systems Centre

Dr Ryerson Christie, School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies - Lecturer in East Asian Studies

Professor Keri Facer, Graduate School of Educational & Social Futures, Centre for Globalisation, Education and Social Futures.

Thorsten Wagner, Professor of water and environmental Engineering

Philippa Bayley, Cabot Manager

Terra Sprague, University of Bristol Law School, Centre for Comparative and international Research in Education

Pru Foster Dr Pru Foster, Global Change, School of Earth Sciences, Research Fellow, Lecturer, Research Fellow School of Chemistry

Colin Taylor, Department of civil Engineering, Professor of Earthquake Engineering, systems centre

Jack Nicholls, PHD Student Renewables and the Environment

Amanda Woodman-Hardy, Cabot Institute Coordinator

Amanda Gray, Cabot Institute Administrator

Sophie Bull, community Engagement Manager, St Werburghs City Farm

Louisa Fairclough, Spike Island Associates

### **Wider University participation**

Mireia Bes, Center for Public Engagement, Bristol University

Dr Tamsin Badcoe, English Department, Centre for Romantic and Victorian Studies and Perspectives from the Sea Researcher

Jimmy Packman, Lecturer in British Romanticism and Perspectives from the Sea Researcher

Tim Cole, Professor of Social History

Rachel Wall, Schumacher Institute for sustainable Systems, Bristol University

**The Island Folk Choir**

**The voices of:**

Kathy Pollard

Thomas Nunns

Simon Van der Linde

Winnie Love

Paul Guilfoyle

Tamara Evans Braun

Boris Drappier

Nic Damery

Chloe Woods

Mark Corbin

Judy Rose

Claire Goulding

Meg Jones

Nici Dunkelman

Simone Davis

Rosa Wellspring

Max Holloway

Naomi Millner

Imogen Cooke

Polly Wilde

Richard Andersen

Jack Young

Jen Harrison

Jen Steiner

Josh Cooke

**Other Bristol participants**

Sarah Toy, Resilience Officer

Julian, Bristol Archive Office

Create centre

## TESTIMONIES

*It was truly a beautiful and contemplative exhibit. I think it is this contemplative aspect that I found most powerful - on Sunday, Hayley and I were coming from the Climate March - songs, noise, speeches and kinetic energy in the rain. All of it a fantastic part of who we are. But it was valuable to also slow down and think in a more relaxed manner about our world. We might need to take urgent action but we do not need to act urgently (if that makes sense!).*

*Cannot wait to see you again - please stay in touch!*

*Best, Rich  
Richard D. Pancost  
Director of the Cabot Institute*

*Hi there Fourthland,*

*I came along to your workshop a few weeks ago at Bristol University. I am intrigued by the conversation surrounding resilience and would like to offer my assistance, should you need it, for the exhibition.*

*The week of the workshop I had been quite ill and was worried I would not be able to say or contribute much. I nearly didn't go but made it and you invited me to play the gorgeous grand piano, which allowed me to contribute in a way I had not imagined at all. Having just finished an unpleasant course of anti biotics you also reminded me of the wonders of Kefir, which i now have on the go again myself.*

*Mostly you reignited my interest in resilience as I had been moving to a sceptical standpoint on the subject as the word is increasingly being casually dropped in here, there and everywhere as a new 'sustainable'; a buzz word that can be manipulated to serve a wide array of purposes.*

*Your project reminded me that there are many ways to promote and continue the conversation..... so thankyou!*

*Taking the conversation to a public space is a very valuable move, so if I can return the favour by helping you out with the show it would be my pleasure. I'm not sure what needs doing but I'm fairly versatile so just let me know.*

*Many thanks for a spark re-lit*

*.  
Best wishes,  
Rachel...*

*Hi guys,*

*Woah, was totally amazing! I honestly feel like I'm seeing the world in a completely different way. Thank you so much for coming down and engaging us with your art and your way of thinking. Totally blew me away.*

*Thanks again  
Kind regards  
Amanda WH  
Cabot Institute*

*Dear Louise and Eva,*

*Thank you again for the sensory and subversive experience today in Albert's bar, Victoria Rooms, Bristol.*

*As a student starting a PhD programme titled 'Environment, Energy and Resilience', I was drawn to the event to hear other's perspectives on the what resilience means to them. In academic institutions there is a bit of a tendency, as I'm sure you are well aware, to find a new buzz term that gets used and recycled ad infinitum until the next new term is found and the whole process starts again. Before the event I was admittedly a little cynical that this space would be filled with such buzz terms, and therefore to encounter silence and sensory led explorations and deep and thoughtful reflections was a pleasure.*

*I mentioned to Louise that I would send across some commentary on Iris Marion Young. A wonderful political theorist who died too early and whose ideas seem to chime with what was being talked about near the end of the discussions (although the activity itself was so enjoyable partly as it removed the use of spoken language). Young proposes that greeting, narrative and rhetoric must be accepted into public spaces so that 'sub-culture' voices are not excluded from public debates, where often cool reason and the articulate few set agendas and define normality. Maybe these three were present in the space today in a non verbal way?*

*As a very brief summary:*

*The first of these - greeting or public acknowledgement - establishes a bond between people by acknowledging presence. Trust is involved by an individual taking the risk of opening themselves up and exposing themselves to the potential neediness of the other. Rhetoric enables the inclusion of emotion into discourse. Young suggests that as rhetoric is an inherent part of all communication, cannot be excluded from public discourse, even though in many spaces rhetoric is regarded as inappropriate. Third, Young stresses the importance of narrative as a means for individuals to share their experiences. Stories opens up public discourse to alternative presuppositions which can challenge accepted norms. Young believes that if communication is only mediated through argument, many voices are excluded. The inclusion of these three alternative forms of communication are important for challenging the exclusionary practices that Young identified in her critique, discussed above.*

*If you were ever interested in reading something buy Young I would suggest two of her books, Justice and the Politics of Difference and Inclusion and Democracy.*

*Thanks again  
Jack Nicholls  
Cabot Institute*

*I so loved working with you two and would be very happy to get to spend more time singing and dreaming with you both! The whole thing was like a beautiful dream.*

*- Polly Wilde, The Island Folk Choir*

*Hello Louise and Eva,*

*Participating in your project has been an amazing experience: I've learnt lots but I think it has also changed or uncovered a different way in which to approach some things in my own life. The two main things that I would highlight though are:*

***Listen – slow – silence***

*You created spaces where listening to each other was a priority and you did it in a very natural way, no one had to tell each other to listen, it just happened. I feel that more and more in our daily conversations we just tend to talk on the top of each other, waiting for the other one to finish a sentence just to say ours without even having reflected on what the other just said, almost as if we were afraid of the silence or even afraid of listening. It's impossible to have a real connection and learn from the other in this way. The spaces you created were safe spaces, like protected from the frenzy of the outside world. Spaces where there was time, and where things could be slow, and where we had the chance to listen to each other. I think someone said that doing some repetitive jobs was not losing time but making it, and I feel you do the same with listening.*

***The other – connect - learn***

*I've always thought that there are some random encounters that can actually change your life, the person sitting next to you in the bus could have really valuable information for you, but you will never know it if you don't talk to them.*

*I think this is something else that came across very strongly in my experience. You created spaces where we could approach each other in a very human way. We didn't know each other but we were sharing our imaginations, thoughts and feelings. Approaching people from curiosity, and acknowledging that everyone can make a contribution, regardless of their background, regardless of hierarchies.*

*Creating true connections with other people and then listen and learn. I think this is the only way in which we will be able to face and adapt to some of the challenges that are awaiting for us, such as environmental issues but also social ones.*

*And two other impacts on me, personally:*

***Escoltar (to listen in Catalan) - almonds - bundle***

*After the meeting we had at the café, I started a notebook where I write down things I learn from the people I encounter during the day. I also discovered after your workshops the importance of listening to ourselves and learning from ourselves as well as connecting to this “back where we have not quite been”, maybe through dreams, I write those too now. In your public dreaming workshop I saw my grandmother in a small town in the South of Catalonia, it's called Batea and it was my granddad's home town. I'm looking forward to going back home and visit/experience Batea, to get almonds from there -my granddad used to have big fields of almond trees- and carry them as a bundle with me, and see what I can learn from that.*

***Birds – clay – clay bird and nest***

*I dreamt and travelled while laying on pheasants. I've been scared by birds since I was a kid, but at the same time I'm really fascinated by them and by people that love them. I still don't know what it meant for me to lay on the pheasants, but in a way it's been a way to understand that things that we are scared of may actually be pleasant and protective if we give them a chance. And this connects to clay in a way, the first time I ever made clay was in the primary school, we didn't do it in the classroom, we had a sandpit – huge one – and we were bringing water and making rocks, which we would bury to dry. A kid from my class made a nest with a bird, which we put in the window of our classroom to dry. I remember a feeling of warmth from it, maybe because of the colour of the sand. We were all so impressed by how he had created this from the sand. From then on, I've always done pottery –intermittently – and I have this feeling of warmth in all the pottery spaces where I've been.”*

*- Project participant University of Bristol*

*What struck me while watching the participants handle the string/yarn was how much, to me, it reflected human interaction with environment and the concept of intervention. It was interesting to watch how differently people 'acted' - how they handled the material in different ways, how the string got 'caught' up with some individuals, and stretched with others. It was fascinating to observe how some people tried to balance that point where the string was particularly long with one individual...some others changed the way they interacted with the string as it arrived to them, trying to create different kinds of gaps. As others got involved, that changed the dynamic as well. This all felt happily metaphoric for the way we engage with nature, how we change it - sometimes deliberately and other times without our knowing so.*

*I love the idea that when the yarn had passed through everyone's hands, it was 'back to where it had not quite been'...that in some ways it had returned to its original state, but by virtue of having passed through everyone's hands, it was transformed by touch and by 're-assembly' - it is not possible for the ball to return to exactly the same state. This resonates for me with resilience inasmuch as after a personal natural disaster we do not usually return to exactly where we were before - we return to an equilibrium in a different spot.*

*- Terra Sprague, Cabot Institute researcher*

*I entered your other world, or rather the world that feels hidden. I spent a deeply satisfying time wrapping myself with the spirit you weave. I loved the mysterious and yet oddly familiar objects. To me your exhibition feels like a museum of objects from a strange yet familiar culture that we should not lose our connection with.*

*- Show visitor*

***Intelligent, elegant and insightful and deeply moving***

*- Conference participant*

***Thank you for the invitation on Saturday. I had such a great time and found it incredibly moving and exciting.***

*- Conference participant*

***Ambitious and surprising***

*- Show visitor*

***Incredible show, fascinating four days***

*- Event and show visitor*

***I heard such wonderful things about the weekend's events and the show was truly magical, so glad I caught it!***

*- Show visitor*

***I have learnt more from this process than I could have ever imagined***

*- Cabot Institute and event participant*





With our deepest of gratitude to all those involved.

Thank you,  
isik knutsdotter.

Resilience LAB and back to where we have not quite been were supported by



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