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Art, Music and Sustainability

By Arash Pandi



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Photo: Annie Spratt (on Unsplash)

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PREFACE

In recent years, the climate crisis, the concept of sustainability, and the call for a “green transition” have significantly influenced many artists, motivating them to respond creatively. Musicians and sound artists, in particular, have engaged with ecological and environmental issues, leading to a dynamic landscape of sound and musical expression. These artists have taken diverse approaches: some combine activism with their art, using it as a tool for creative protest; others act as ambassadors for the earth and its inhabitants; some collaborate with scientists to amplify their voices; and many strive to personally transform their lifestyles, offering inspiration to their audiences.

Beyond simply addressing climate change and sustainability as themes in their art, some artists have also reconsidered the production and delivery of their music. They’ve asked how their creative processes align with the principles of sustainability, questioning the environmental impact of their work.

In this paper, I have defined “sustainability” from a holistic perspective, drawing from the word’s etymology and broader meanings. I then analyzed various approaches to social change and explored how these can be integrated into artistic practice. To conclude, I have presented a collection of artistic practices that resonate with these approaches, including my own work and reflections. The insights shared here are informed by dialogues and experiences from the “Creative Climate Leadership” sessions in 2022, organized by Julie’s Bicycle, the “Time to Listen” conferences by Field Notes and the Academy of Arts of Berlin in 2022 and 2024, as well as personal conversations and interviews with artists and activists.

I hope this paper sparks further dialogue and action across all sectors of society, encouraging both awareness and change to avoid climate catastrophe and rebuild our environment on sustainable values.

Arash Pandi



Arash Pandi live at ALICE, Copenhagen | Photo: Matthias Grandjean

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"It's 3:23 in the morning
and I'm awake
because my great great grandchildren
won't let me sleep
my great great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
what did you do when the earth was unraveling?
surely you did something
when the seasons started failing?
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest
when democracy was stolen?
what did you do
once
you
knew?"

- **Drew Dellinger**

INTRODUCTION

I'm sitting in my new workspace in Rasht, my hometown in northern Iran, surrounded by the Caspian Sea to the north, and forests and mountains to the east, west, and south. This area offers an incredible diversity of nature, all within a small radius. From semi-tropical lowlands with rice cultivation to rocky, arid mountains soaring 4000 meters high, it's a place that should feel like a paradise. In the city itself, three rivers pass through, making it seem like a slice of heaven on Earth. However, the reality I'm seeing now, especially since returning in January 2025, couldn't be further from that image. Overpopulation, driven by droughts and heatwaves in central and southern Iran, has strained this area. Uncontrolled urbanization, driven by cheap

and unsustainable construction materials, has scarred the landscape. Waste management is a mess, with no recycling systems in place. What once was a serene view of rice fields with distant mountain sights is now deformed by plastic waste and trash blowing across the fields, rivers running black with city waste, and buildings made of cement blocks—unsettlingly, even high up in the mountains, all due to government corruption. Anyone with the financial means or connections, be it through wealth, ignorance, or political ties, is free to destroy the landscape and exploit the environment without consequence. It's a painful contrast to the natural beauty this region once embodied.



Rasht, Iran | Photo: Aash Pandi



2024 was the hottest year on record, and it was also the first full year when the global average temperature surpassed pre-industrial levels by 1.5°C—the limit set by the Paris Agreement. The situation is grim, and the reality is just as dark. The elephant in the room is no longer hiding in the shadows; we're fully aware of it and now must face it. Pretending it isn't there or avoiding it only fools us and wastes the precious little time we have left to save the planet—and, most crucially, to save ourselves. (well, the polar bears have been suffering for decades not just now that cities like Hamburg, Amsterdam, Tokyo, and New York are at risk of being submerged by rising sea levels). This isn't some far-off issue—it's happening now, and we can no longer ignore it.

But there's still hope, and so much we could do, as professor Kimberly Nicholas writes in her book "under the sky we make":
"It's warming. It's us. We're sure. It's bad. But! We can fix it: Humans have the capacity to stop dangerously destabilizing the climate.
We don't really need more science to solve the climate crisis. Saving the planet for humanity (and the rest of nature) is no longer a matter of understanding anything



Rasht, Iran | Photos: Aash Pandi

we don't or developing a ton of technology we haven't. What we need is people with courage and compassion and imagination to transform themselves, and society, in the ways that science tells us are necessary to maintain conditions for life on Earth to be able to thrive. Those of us who want to help are the majority; if even a fraction of us can mobilize and take action, we are more than enough to stabilize the climate."

For this, she advocates adopting the Regeneration Mindset, which emphasizes working with nature rather than against it, and striving to bring out the best in ourselves and others. This mindset can be distilled into three key principles: Respect life. Stop harming life. Strengthen life. This philosophy resonates closely with the concept of "non-violence," which I've encountered from various perspectives during my own transformative journey—from being a musician and sound enthusiast to becoming an organic farmer and climate/vegan activist.



WHERE IT ALL STARTED FOR ME

Eleven years ago, I moved to Denmark to study sound design at Sonic College—what I believed to be the dream of my journey in sound and music. And for a while, it truly was. I immersed myself in new technologies, equipment, and techniques, experiencing opportunities that would have been out of reach in a country burdened by severe international sanctions and an authoritarian government—one that resisted openness to new cultures, or more precisely, to a free and reflective way of thinking. Throughout my studies, I struggled with the existential crisis of migration—transitioning from a deeply conflicted, oppressive and patriarchal regime and society to what was often referred to as ‘the happiest country in the world.’ I constantly questioned the personal significance of my education and everything I was learning. But it was after completing my studies that one question loomed largest: What is all this knowledge and experience truly for? Having witnessed so much hardship in Iran, I struggled to accept the idea of simply landing a job in a game company, earning a paycheck, securing my residency, and ultimately obtaining a Danish passport—the so-called ‘golden ticket’ in the eyes of many Middle Easterners. I knew there’s something more I’m looking for in life.

So, I decided to move back to Iran—to an old house in the suburbs of my hometown in the north—and take a break from working as a sound designer and musician. To many people around me, including family and friends, it seemed like a reckless decision. After all, if I ever wanted to return to Denmark or Europe, I’d have to go through the entire visa process again—one that grows more difficult by the day. And so, I lived with a lingering voice in my head, whispering at every turn: You failed. You threw away your best chance. You made the biggest mistake of your life. But deep down, I knew there was a reason I came back. I had returned to find something within myself. I started working on a small piece of land my father owned, renovating the house and caring for the birds he kept there—hens, roosters, ducks, turkeys, quails,

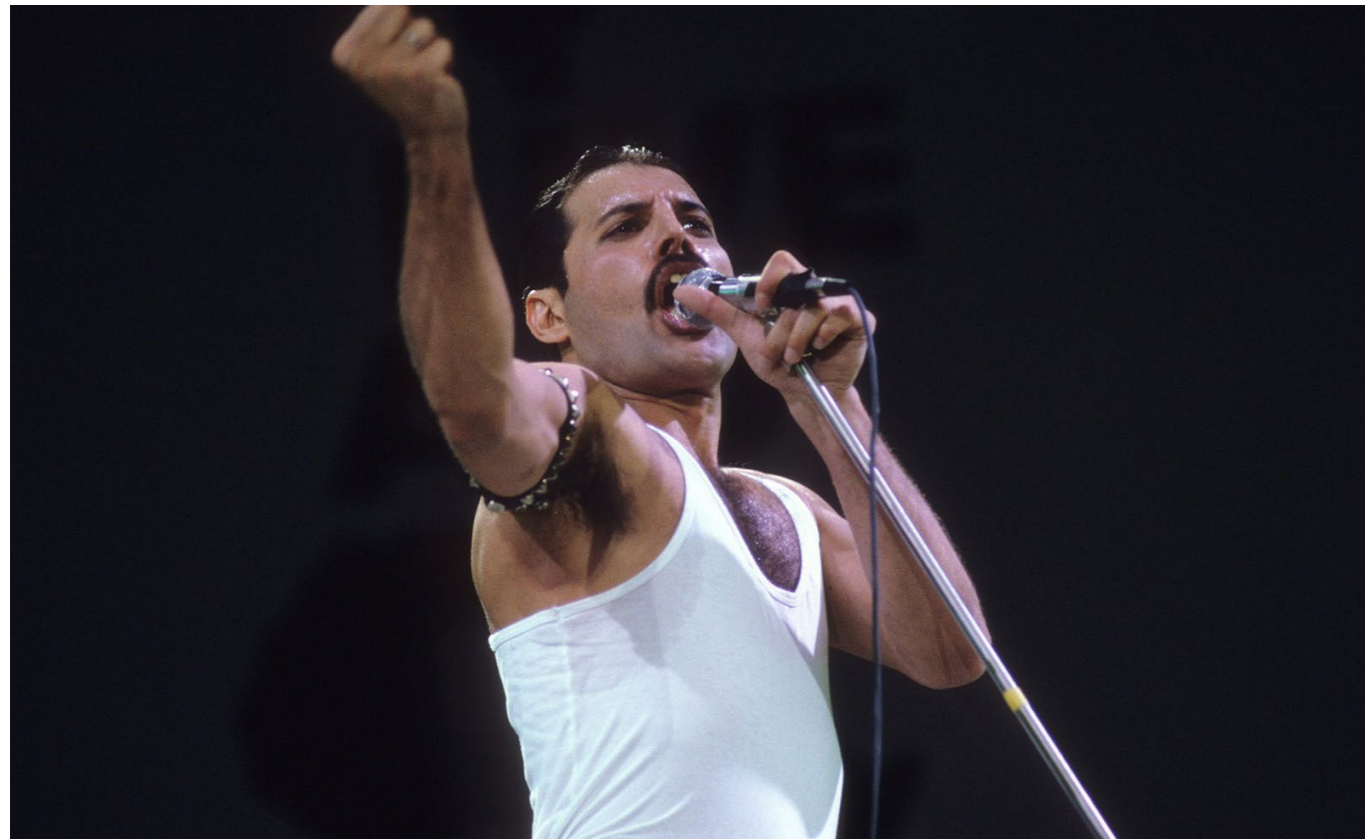
and more. I also adopted a cat and a dog, and over time, they all became my companions and unexpected teachers. Through these small daily tasks, I learned a deeper sense of responsibility—one that extended beyond my own welfare, comfort, leisure, or even the concept of ‘work.’ No matter how late I stayed up at night, I still had to wake up early to feed the birds. Neglecting my own health was my choice, but I couldn’t allow my actions to bring hunger, pain, or suffering to other living beings. And from here, a new journey began. I immersed myself in learning about the environment, health, and the food system—exploring the real consequences of both our actions and inactions. This path ultimately led me back to Denmark, where I pursued work and studies to become an organic farmer. Over the next four to five years, I deepened my research into climate change, engaging in discussions, dialogues, and debates about the impact of agriculture and our food system on the environment. At the same time, I brought these conversations into my artistic network, brainstorming ways to bridge what seemed like two distant and opposing worlds, into something whole and connected.

As a sound artist, it was crucial for me to explore what I could do with sound. Could I use imagination? Storytelling? Could sound become a tool to communicate these urgent issues? Of course, giving talks and lectures is valuable—facts and data make things undeniably clear. But for me, the real question was about impact. Why, despite knowing these facts, do they fail to truly affect us? When people leave the room after a lecture, does it stay with them? Do they reflect on it? Are they motivated to take action? Do they walk away with fear or hope? These emotions matter because action is not driven by fear alone. Fear without direction leads to paralysis. But fear combined with a vision, with possibility, with a sense of empowerment—that is what moves people. That is what leads to real change. And so, I realized: “this is where I need to return to my creative world as an artist.”



Rasht, Iran | Photo: Milad Ahmadi (on Unsplash)

WHY ART AND ESPECIALLY MUSIC?



Freddie Mercury playing with Queen at Live Aid 1985 | Photo: Neil Leifer/Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

The goal here is not to delve into the psychology or neurology of how music and sound affect the brain. Instead, let's ask ourselves a simple question: How do we feel when we listened to our favorite music as kids or when we were younger? Not in the way we do now as professionals—analyzing the structure, production and the content—but in the pure, unfiltered joy of listening without an educated, critical ear. One thing I vividly remember about the music I truly loved was the feeling that the song was about me—as if it came straight from my heart and soul. It told my story, spoke my words. I deeply empathized with it. I felt myself there, within the universe of that music. Now, imagine if songs carried a message urging us to fight for the climate, to live sustainably, to recognize that we all share responsibility for fixing this crisis. Imagine if the music that moves us also inspired action—if it made us feel that by making a change today, we could become the heroes of the stories future generations will tell.

A remarkable example of music's power to unite was Live Aid, organized by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure to raise funds for the 1983–1985 famine in Ethiopia—an event many call 'the day the world united through music.' Seventy thousand people gathered at Wembley Stadium in London, while another 100,000 filled JFK Stadium in Philadelphia. Meanwhile, an estimated 1.9 billion people watched the event live on TV across the globe (well, perhaps not in Iran!). What made Live Aid extraordinary was that while people were singing, dancing, holding hands, and simply enjoying the music, there was one shared thought in everyone's mind: 'We are here to help the famine in Ethiopia.' The money they spent to be part of this moment wasn't just for entertainment—it was contributing to a greater cause. I believe this power is unique to music—the ability to bring hearts together, even those with vastly different ideologies, in pursuit of a noble goal.

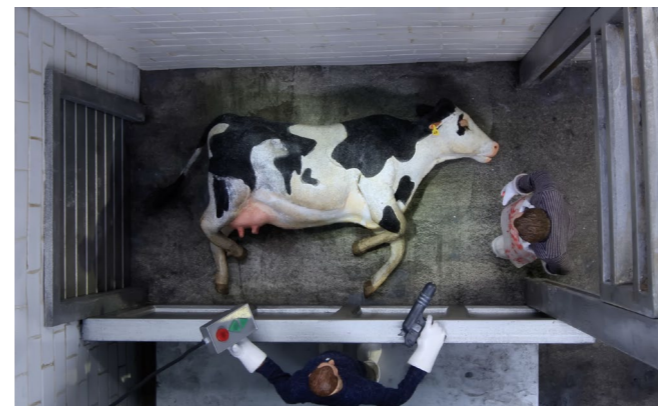
[Just take a look at this unifying force of a crowd singing in harmony](#), the sheer magic of Freddie Mercury and Queen leading thousands of voices as one. Now, imagine if we harnessed that same energy for the climate—to protect and heal our shared home, planet Earth!

Photo: Still from "We Tried" by Louise Harris



A recent example that I really enjoyed watching—and later listening to its music—was the single and music video "[We Tried](#)" by Louise Harris, released in 2023 in collaboration with Music Declares Emergency in the UK. The song made it to No. 2 on the iTunes Pop Chart and No. 3 on the iTunes Singles Chart. As Louise herself describes it, 'a song about the climate crisis, and what will happen if we don't act.'

Photo: Still from "Super Cow" by Dustin Brown feat. Moby



Or take the music video for [Moby's "Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad?"](#)—one of my favorite songs from my teenage years. The stop-motion animation tells the story of a dairy cow's last chance to escape slaughter, a simple yet beautifully poetic narrative that lingers in your mind long after watching.

And this is what music does—it makes us remember!

Through music, we form emotional connections that stay with us, solving one of the biggest challenges climate scientists and activists face: How do we make people truly understand and remember the urgency of the climate crisis, so they are inspired to make better choices every day?

Even the Danish government recognized this power. In 2022, just a year after updating its official dietary recommendations, Denmark's Ministry of Food and Agriculture released [a music video promoting its campaign](#) to encourage eating less meat and more legumes. While it may not have reached as many people as it should have, it still created a lighthearted, approachable way to talk about plant-based eating—making the conversation more accessible and engaging. And of course, with a catchy chorus!



Studies have shown that visual information is processed 60,000 times faster than text and that approximately 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual.

While music and sound function differently—unfolding over time rather than being instantly absorbed like images—they have a unique power that complements visuals (or data) remarkably well. Music often evokes emotions more quickly and deeply than images due to its direct connection to the brain's limbic system. It triggers dopamine release and is highly effective at conveying emotional and contextual cues such as tone, urgency, and mood. Therefore, combining sound and visuals can significantly enhance both comprehension and retention, making complex messages more impactful and memorable.

Photo: Still from "Hvad fuck er en bælgfrugt?" by Federaestyrelsen

BUT HOW DO WE HARNESS THIS POWER?

Recognizing the immense influence of music is one thing, but actively integrating it into the climate movement or using it sustainably is another challenge altogether.

I know many talented musicians and sound artists who fully acknowledge the urgency of climate action, yet haven't necessarily woven sustainability into their artistic work. Often, this hesitation stems from uncertainty—What can I actually do? Where do I start? Do I need to educate myself first, or can I just jump in and let the movement guide me?

My personal answer is: Yes, you can—and yes, you should educate yourself. But learning happens along the way. Sitting back and avoiding the topic just because you're unsure where to begin doesn't help. Even if you don't yet grasp the full scope of the crisis, one thing is clear—it's bad, and it will only get worse if we do nothing. So even the simplest act of acknowledging it in your work can make a difference.

As Professor Antje Boetius, one of Germany's leading Arctic researchers, stated at a classical concert in Germany aimed at raising awareness about the Arctic and its climate significance:

'There is still much we don't know about climate change—it's an incredibly complex issue. But one thing we know for certain: if temperatures rise, ice melts. And if that ice melts, we are in serious trouble.'

But I believe we can—and must—do better. We have the tools to deepen our understanding of just how critical this moment is, to identify the sectors contributing most to greenhouse gas emissions, and, most importantly, to determine the most effective first steps we can take and integrate into our work.

One idea that emerged from several conferences I attended is that, at an organizational level, we must prioritize the most climate-friendly options—especially when doing so comes at no inconvenience. There are many simple yet powerful shifts that can have a meaningful impact.

I remember a moment that left a lasting impact on me: In 2017-18, during a road trip from northern Iran to Tehran, I was having a constructive and meaningful conversation with my friend's mother about the environment, climate, and animal rights. Until at a break stop, I stepped out to smoke. She immediately reacted: "You smoke?! Then I don't believe anything you just said!"

She told me she couldn't accept anything about the environment from someone who smokes. This moment stuck with me, highlighting how important it is for activists, representatives, and creatives to embody the values they advocate for if they want to inspire meaningful social or political change.

While any kind of involvement is important, and we certainly need everyone on board, it's crucial to focus on areas that can lead to rapid and transformative change, especially given the limited time we have. Take, for example, the widespread campaigns against plastic straws in the ocean. While they've done a great job raising awareness, the reality is that plastic straws account for less than 1% of the total plastic pollution in our oceans. On the other hand, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch shows that 75% to 86% of plastic debris comes from fishing and aquaculture activities and lost and discarded fishing gear, often referred to as "ghost gear," makes up about 10% of global marine plastic pollution.

Or the subject of transportation. There's ongoing debate around sustainable transportation in the music industry. Some festivals and funding parties have made the bold decision to stop booking and supporting artists who fly. While this is a significant move toward reducing emissions, it also presents challenges—particularly for artists from the Global South or the Middle East, whose livelihoods depend on touring in the West.

Contrary to what one might expect, aviation only accounts for around 12% of emissions within the transportation sector in Europe compared to road transport that contributes to 73% which includes personal cars and trucks – often used to transport people, equipment, alcohol, and food to festivals. That said, some impactful changes are both simple and highly symbolic. One of the easiest and most effective shifts an event or any group and organization can make is serving only plant-based food. The food industry is responsible for nearly a third of global greenhouse gas emissions, with animal production responsible for the majority of it.

By making simple adjustments, we not only reduce our carbon footprint but also send a powerful message: the climate crisis is urgent, and we are willing to take necessary steps to address it.



Photo: Jack Baxter (on Unsplash)

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY REALLY?

Sustainability goes beyond just the message, the process, or the carbon footprint. It's a more holistic concept. Think of it like organic farming—it's not just about avoiding pesticides and chemical fertilizers. When Lord Northbourne first coined the term "organic farming" in his book *Look to the Land*, he described the farm as "a living whole." He emphasized that: "the farm itself must have a biological completeness; it must be a living entity, it must be a unit which has within itself a balanced organic life". A farm that relied on "imported fertility (...) cannot be self-sufficient nor an organic whole".

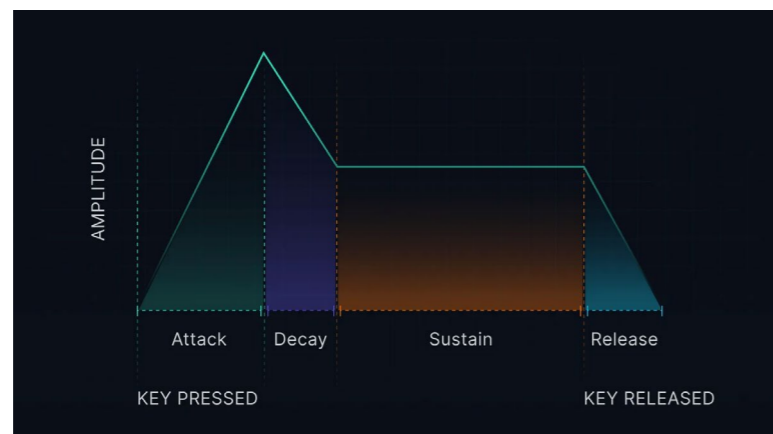
The word "sustain" carries a range of meanings: "to provide the necessities of life," "to support (an act or cause)," or "to prevent from falling or sinking, to keep upright." It's derived from the Latin *sustinere*, meaning "to hold up, bear, undergo, or endure,"

from *sub* (up from below) and *tenere* (to hold). This dual meaning shows both a positive aspect—supporting and uplifting—and a heavier, more burdensome side—having to bear or endure. We can't expect to enjoy all the luxuries of modern life at the expense of our planet's well-being. But this doesn't mean we must live an ascetic life either. For instance, if we learn the art of observation and find peace within ourselves, we might even prefer an eight-hour train ride over a one-hour flight. In the end, nothing is truly lost.

The UN definition of sustainability is "meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" or "living within the limits of our resources, in order to allow the human race to thrive in perpetuity within the Earth's natural systems." This definition later expanded to cover three main dimensions: Environmental, Economic, Social. Meaning that a sustainable plan or process, should take these three dimensions into account and integrate

them together, to result in "thriving, healthy, diverse and resilient communities."

When we discuss concepts like "no-flight for artists," "100% solar-powered recordings and concerts," or "no driving to the concert hall," the solutions we propose need to strike a balance across these three dimensions—social, environmental, and economic. Without this balance, the solutions won't last or truly "sustain" (just like sustain in music!). It might be interesting to visualize our sustainability journey using an ADSR (Attack, Decay, Sustain, Release) diagram.



Screenshot from the article "What is ADSR?" | Illustration: Pibox.com

So, what kind of ADSR curve should our path to sustainability follow? Should it be percussive, with a sharp, immediate Attack (A), followed by a rapid Decay and little Sustain? Or should it have a gentle, prolonged Attack and Decay, with a long (or perhaps endless)

Sustain? Can that even work? Does it match the urgency of the climate crisis and the transformation needed? Does it align with the society we live in? And, perhaps most importantly, does it resonate with me, as the person I am right now?

In relation to the last point, I'd like to highlight a key potential of walking this path: it has the power to transform the person we believe ourselves to be. Finding that delicate balance is crucial—one that allows us to draw boundaries without pushing ourselves too far and risking burnout, as is often the case with activists. At the same time, we shouldn't settle for simply engaging in a "pointing out" activity towards climate and sustainability. It's a beautiful journey that navigates between love and fear. It's the tension between staying true to who we think we are and stepping into the unknown—an incredible journey of expanding our personal boundaries and capacities.

THERE'S SPACE FOR EVERYONE!

It's important to recognize that for any meaningful change to occur in society and policy, a diverse range of actors is needed—and the movement for climate change is no different. Some will take on the role of firefighters, but we can't expect that from everyone, nor should everyone be in that role. Firefighters who rush into the flames need support from others—people who clear the streets, call for assistance, provide food and water, and ensure the safety of everyone involved. Equally, we need individuals who will focus on the long-term healing and regeneration after the disaster. So, there's space for everyone to contribute in their own way!

At COP29 in Baku, I could clearly sense the need for a diverse range of approaches in climate activism. I met passionate activists protesting against the fossil fuel and animal agriculture industries right inside the UN conference halls. I spoke with young politicians eager to push their parties or organizations toward progressive policies, such as implementing plant-based initiatives. I also encountered quiet activists holding banners, distributing food, and engaging in personal conversations about what individuals can do to make a difference.

But one thing was missing—art. I felt the absence of a creative, artistic approach to communicating the message, something that could cut through the chaotic crowd of 6,000 media and government representatives and truly capture attention.

Our group managed to secure a slot for a meeting room, where we discussed the urgent need for policy changes in the food system. As part of the session, a classical soprano performed an a cappella version of *May It Be* by Enya. Afterward, several attendees approached us, saying the musical performance was the highlight of the meeting—it had momentarily lifted them out of the cold, dry, and exhausting atmosphere of the conference.

Morten Grønfeldt, a trained energy advisor, collaborated with Simply Red and Adrian Sullivan to record an entire album using only solar energy. They also attempted to carry this sustainable approach into their live performances, aiming to prove to other artists

that there is an alternative, eco-friendly way to produce music—one that bypasses traditional record companies profiting from the industry.

While the album was successful, it came at a significant cost. Grønfeldt's unwavering dedication to sustainable music production took a toll on both his personal and financial life. Despite his efforts, the project didn't gain the traction he had hoped for. The album struggled to get radio play, and their concert event later faced financial difficulties due to the challenge of securing partners willing to support a fully solar-powered show. Still, Grønfeldt views the endeavor as a success and remains committed to the cause. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that this path isn't for everyone. Not all artists are willing—or able—to endure such challenges for a noble cause, and they shouldn't have to. There is room for everyone in the movement, and change can come in many different forms.



Simply Green live at Margård Slot, Fyn | Photo: Gaffa.dk

ARTISTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Bill Moyers' Four Roles of Social Activism offers a valuable framework for understanding social change, particularly for artists. It provides a way to recognize individual strengths and explore how different roles can connect and collaborate to amplify their impact. For the arts—and especially music—to serve as a powerful catalyst in the climate movement, we must fully explore the possibilities available to us. As Moyer himself noted:

“Successful social movements include all four roles – even if they sometimes seem to conflict – but each can either help or undermine a movement, depending on context, timing, and how it is played.”

With this in mind, I have put together a summary of the adaptation of these four roles, as presented by Julie's Bicycle during the Creative Climate Leadership course in 2022.



Bill Moyers | Photo: Billmoyers.com

Take this example into account:

The Scenario: A major oil spill happens. It starts choking the coastline and killing seabirds, and also threatens the livelihood of the communities based near the coastline, who depend on the sea for their living - including fishing, tourism, and crafts based on natural resources found along the coastline.

The local government's response is really inadequate – both in terms of preparation for a disaster like this, and in terms of how it executes its already not-very-good response plan.

National organisations would have the resources to respond, but are not properly mobilized - they're not really brought in. The bad relief effort highlights a number of broader issues about how the government at all levels responds, especially to issues involving poorer parts of society.

What do you do to change this dreadful situation? Take a quick moment to think what you would do if you lived on that coastline.

Advocates:

We need to get on the local government's case right away, and see what is keeping the authorities from doing their jobs. We know they could get national support here right away: there are systems in place and we need to make sure everyone has tried all the options.

Helpers:

We need to get on the local government's case right away, and see what is keeping the authorities from doing their jobs. We know they could get national support here right away: there are systems in place and we need to make sure everyone has tried all the options.

Organizer:

We need to get on the local government's case right away, and see what is keeping the authorities from doing their jobs. We know they could get national support here right away: there are systems in place and we need to make sure everyone has tried all the options.

Rebels:

We need to get on the local government's case right away, and see what is keeping the authorities from doing their jobs. We know they could get national support here right away: there are systems in place and we need to make sure everyone has tried all the options.

A general guideline for the four roles could look like this:

1. Advocates / Reformers

- Focus: Engage with authorities (“powerholders”) to influence policies and laws through institutional means.
- Examples: Legal challenges (e.g., suing governments), lobbying for policy change.
- Strengths: Translate movement goals into actionable demands; ensure policy enforcement.
- Risks: May settle for minor reforms, get co-opted by power structures, or lose connection with grassroots efforts.

How to Determine If You Are an Advocate:

- Do you naturally turn to authority figures to address problems?
- For example, as a child, did you report bullying to a teacher or authority figure?
- Are you skilled at articulating arguments and framing demands to appeal to those in power?

2. Helpers / Citizens

- Focus: Provide direct support or action to address issues, empowering individuals and communities.
- Examples: Launching community projects, teaching practical skills (e.g., energy conservation).
- Strengths: Demonstrates grassroots support, empowers individuals, adds legitimacy to movements.
- Risks: May overly focus on individual actions without addressing systemic changes.

How to Determine If You Are a Helper:

- Are you happiest when engaging in hands-on activities with tangible outcomes?
- For example, did you step in to personally help when someone was hurt or in trouble as a child?
- Do you enjoy being directly involved in improving others' lives and seeing immediate impact?

3. Organizers / Change Agents

- Focus: Mobilise large groups, create coalitions, and foster collaboration toward shared goals.
- Examples: Organising climate marches or campaigns (e.g., Avaaz, Change.org).
- Strengths: Build public engagement, foster long-term dialogue, and promote consensus.
- Risks: Risk idealism over practicality and may overlook systemic root causes.

How to Determine If You Are an Organizer:

- Do you enjoy bringing together diverse groups to work toward common goals?
- For example, did you organise school events like “awareness days” or motivate groups during challenging situations?
- Are you energized by coordinating efforts and building momentum for a cause?

4. Rebels

- Focus: Use disruptive, non-violent actions to draw attention to injustices and force societal confrontation.
- Examples: Protests, sit-ins, or symbolic acts of defiance.
- Strengths: Push issues onto public agendas, highlight institutional failures, and demand accountability.
- Risks: May alienate potential supporters by polarising issues, resorting to violence, or self-marginalisation.

How to Determine If You Are a Rebel:

- Are you drawn to bold, dramatic action to challenge injustices?
- For example, did you ever organize or participate in a sit-in, strike, or protest as a child?
- Do you feel compelled to challenge authority directly and highlight systemic failures?



Photo: Damiano Baschiera (on Unsplash)

Reflections on the “four roles”:

- What makes each role essential for driving change? What unique strengths does this role contribute to a movement?
- What personal traits, skills, or qualities are important for someone to be effective in each role?
- How might your approach or perspective in a particular role create tension with others? What challenges might arise when collaborating across roles, and how can these be addressed through strong teamwork and support?
- Can you name individuals or organizations whose climate change efforts you admire? What role do they play in their work?

Ask yourself this:

What does individual action mean to you?

e.g. lead by example, critical thinking, empathy raising, conscious lifestyle, imagination, Staying connected to your purpose and acting from the heart, individual learning and being triggered by it, training your awareness, being responsible for the stories you carry, learn from others and being part of a community, etc.

What does system change mean to you?

e.g. public opinion shift, new policies, redirecting funds, changing education, work with policy makers, change in collective advocacy, adjusting policies to eco-centric, etc.

What powers do I have in my work? What is in my control?

e.g. The power to set budgets,
The power to make creative decisions,
The power to speak directly to audiences (or another group of people),
The power to say no,
The power to be as loud and as political as I want,
The power to commission art,
The power to make partnerships,
The power to tell others what to do,
The power that comes from having a space in which people gather,
The power to choose what I make art about,
The power of enough financial security to afford time,
The power from working at an influential institution,
The power of not working in an institution,
The power to choose my own projects

What is outside my control? What limits and controls my decisions?

Artist or creative director vision,
Budgets (set by ...),
The membership or organisations I represent,
board of trustees,
funder,
The venues or institutions that receive or commission my work,
Audiences and their expectations,
Government

Final reflections on power and control :

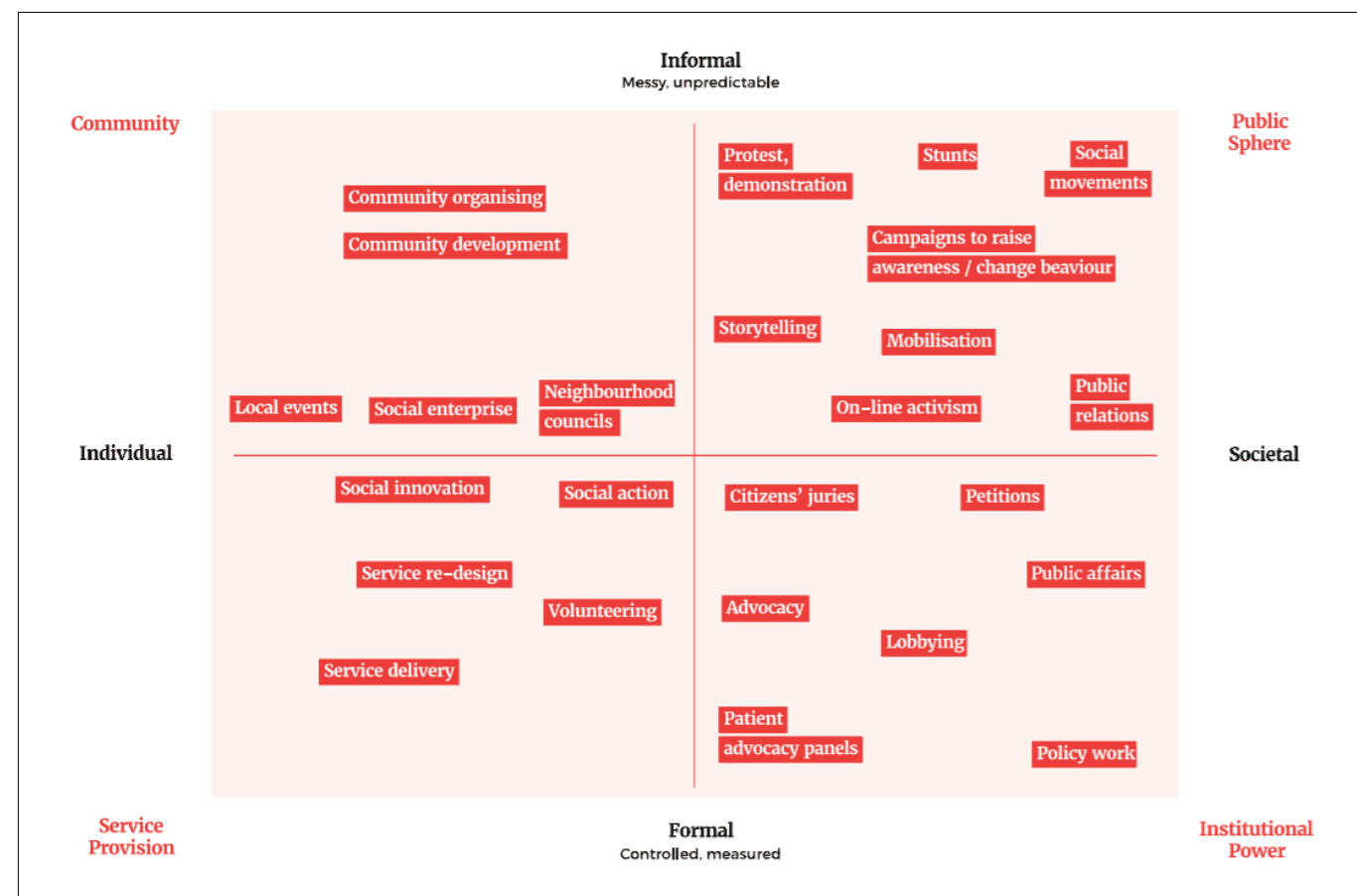
- When considering your personal influence, what values or principles matter most to you?
- Reflecting on the boundaries of your influence, what challenges or obstacles frustrate you the most? If you had the power to change something, what would it be?
- Thinking back to the roles of social change, how does your current role or position align with the one you felt most naturally connected to?

THE SOCIAL CHANGE GRID

Another valuable model to explore is the Social Change Grid by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation. This framework helps individuals and organizations map out their position in the broader landscape of change-making by considering their strengths, limitations, and strategic opportunities. When thinking about the climate crisis and how to take action, this model allows you to assess your abilities, constraints, and level of influence. By positioning

yourself within this grid, you can better understand where you fit in the movement, what role suits you best, and how you can connect with others to amplify impact. Integrating this with the Four Roles can provide a clearer roadmap for future planning—whether through direct action, advocacy, creative expression, or behind-the-scenes organizing.

The Social Change Grid



The Social Change Grid | Illustration: Sheila McKechnie Foundation

THE SEVEN CREATIVE CLIMATE TRENDS

Julie's Bicycle, through the Creative Climate Leadership project, has developed a framework called the Seven Creative Climate Trends, which categorizes different ways artists and creatives can engage with the climate movement. This framework serves as a valuable reference for envisioning diverse approaches within the arts sector toward sustainability. These trends highlight how artistic practices can

contribute to climate action—not just through messaging, but also through systemic change, innovative collaborations, and rethinking the way art is created and shared. By exploring these trends, artists can find inspiration, identify their strengths, and choose pathways that align with their work and values while driving meaningful impact.

The Seven Creative Climate Trends | Illustration: Julie's Bicycle



1. ART-WORK

Be it music, poetry, film, literature, spoken word, exhibition, craft, dance, or documentary, creative work is exploring environmental themes from all angles.

2. ACTIVISM

Artists and creatives publicly championing environmental causes. These people are uniquely placed to connect their audiences and fans, gather momentum, amplify calls for change, speak to power, and call on governments to raise ambition.

3. ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Trail-blazing organisations – the eco-systems for creative and artistic work – are demonstrating a new cultural value chain that aligns missions and visions to an environmentally sustainable organisations, invigorating the spaces, events and communities they serve: day-to-day habits; audience campaigns; low carbon technologies; green procurement policies, artist commissions, governance and advocacy.

5. COLLABORATION

Creatives are coming together to be bigger than the sum of their parts, scaling action, accelerating learning, building communities of practice and demolishing outworn and unhelpful silos. This collaborative spirit, often reaching well beyond the sector, is generating new value based on a shared sense of purpose and possibility.

6. PATH-FINDING

Individuals and organisations poised where culture and the environment meet, making the case, creating contexts for action, building bridges, setting the agenda, curating the conversations and demonstrating the possible.

7. POLICY CHANGING

Policy, a golden thread that binds together the values and narratives of the Seven Creative Climate Trends, creating the frameworks, investments, accountability, authority and pathways to drive progress and track change.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability in the Art is not just about reducing carbon footprints or spreading environmental messages—it is a holistic approach that redefines how we create, engage, and exist as artists within a fragile world. As this paper has explored, musicians and sound artists have a unique ability to connect people emotionally, using sound as a powerful medium to evoke empathy, awareness, and ultimately, action. The climate crisis is no longer a distant threat; it is our current reality. The increasing destruction of natural landscapes, the overconsumption of resources, the exploitation of animal-people, loss of biodiversity and the continued reliance on unsustainable systems call for immediate and transformative change. The urgency of our time demands more than passive concern; it requires transformative action. As the UN Climate chief said in April 2024:

“We only have two years left to save the planet. Climate action is not solely the responsibility of those in positions of power; rather, it requires collective effort from every individual on the planet.”

Scientists, activists, and policymakers have spent decades raising alarms, but they often struggle to engage the public on a deep, emotional level. Data alone does not inspire change. Policies alone do not shift cultures. This is where art becomes essential. Art serves as the bridge—connecting knowledge to action, fear to hope, and individuals to collective responsibility.

“I have a dream. I dream that all the world will become peaceful. I dream that all the killing will stop. I dream that all the children will walk in peace and harmony. I dream that all the nations shake hands with each other, protect each other and help each other. I dream that our beautiful planet will not be destroyed. It takes billion, billion, trillions of years to produce this planet and it’s so beautiful, so wonderful. I dream that it will continue, but in peace, beauty and love.”

– **Supreme Master Ching Hai**

Art can help us feel and remember.

History has shown that art can be a catalyst for social change, from protest songs to large-scale benefit concerts that have united millions. In the face of climate crisis, music can play an equally vital role—not only by spreading awareness but by helping people imagine and embrace a new way of living.

Yet, sustainability is not a rigid formula; it is a dynamic, evolving path. Some artists will take direct action, others will educate, and many will find ways to embed sustainability into their creative processes. Whether it is through ethical touring, carbon-neutral production, regenerative collaborations, or storytelling that reshapes public perception, every contribution matters. There is no single way to be part of this movement, but there is space for everyone.

The journey toward sustainability requires imagination, courage, and persistence. It is not about sacrificing creativity but about redefining our values—shifting from an extractive mindset to one of coexistence and care. From an ego-centric world to an eco-centric. If we embrace this challenge with the same passion that drives our art, we can transform not only our industry but also the world we live in. The future is unwritten, and as artists, we hold the power to compose a more just, sustainable, and harmonious world.



Binh Duong, Vietnam | Photo: Vinh Thang (on Unsplash)

APPENDIX

Artists, Projects, Collaborations and Organizations

Below, I have gathered a selection of artistic approaches, projects, organizations, works, and insights from artists engaged in the climate movement. Each of these examples showcases a unique way of addressing climate change through creativity, aligning with the various social and artistic strategies discussed earlier. These references serve as inspiration, demonstrating how different artistic practices can contribute to climate action in impactful and meaningful ways.



Orchester Des Wandels

#artwork #science #community #policy #activism

In 2019, musicians from Berlin, Duisburg, Bremen, and Braunschweig united through a shared passion for climate protection and, along with other German professional musicians, founded Orchester des Wandels e.V. ("Orchestra of Change") in 2020. By expanding its network to include local scientific and civic organizations, the orchestra aims to share knowledge and experience while amplifying its message.

They describe their vision:

"As musicians, we view protection of the climate, nature and species as part of our cultural mission. We strive to be active in this mission and to confront the climate crisis in creative ways through music. We use the emotional power of music to reach and inspire people. Our goal is to join with our audiences and collaborate to create a sustainable living society, thereby preserving our planet as a place worth living for future generations."

Orchester des wandels has been active in quiet various ways, such as sending a message to COP26 that we are running out of time, playing concert in pasture and botanical garden, collaboration with scientists on stage and reforestation projects in Brazil and Madagascar. One of their most exciting projects I came across is Arctica, a collaboration between the Orchester des Wandels and renowned German Arctic researcher Prof. Antje Boetius, director of the Alfred Wegener

Institute. This project aimed to raise awareness about the alarming rate of Arctic ice melt, particularly among an audience that may not have been deeply informed about climate issues—classical music enthusiasts. Featuring Alina Pogostkina, winner of the 2005 International Sibelius Competition in Helsinki, as the solo violinist, the orchestra performed powerful works by Sibelius and Grieg while slow-moving images of the Arctic, recorded by Prof. Boetius' research vessel, were projected onto a screen. Midway through the concert, the performance paused, and Prof. Boetius took the stage to speak about her work and the critical importance of preserving the Arctic—and the planet's climate as a whole.

According to Detlef Grooss, co-founder of Orchester des Wandels, this was one of their most impactful events. The concert received overwhelmingly positive feedback, including from the mayor, and left many attendees with a profound realization: This is serious—we need to do something about it!

COP26 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyOiSD6-l70>

Arctica : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL6o74JQ2w0>

Pasture concert : <https://www.orchester-des-wandels.de/en/unsere-konzerte/weiden-matinee/>



Photos: Detlef Grooß

The ClimateMusic Project

#artwork #science #collaborative

Combining the talents and expertise of world class scientists, composers, musicians, artists, and tech pros, the ClimateMusic Project enables the creation and staging of science-guided music and visual experiences to inspire people to engage actively on the issue of climate change.

As the group's founder Stephan Crawford explained to the New York Times, "Music is really visceral... Listening to a composition is an active experience, not just a passive one. It can make climate change feel more personal and inspire people to take action."

Music is familiar, accessible, and—for most people—much easier to relate to than articles or lectures about the climate crisis. The ClimateMusic Project is created to harness this universal language to tell the urgent story of climate change to broad and diverse audiences in a way that resonates, educates, and motivates.

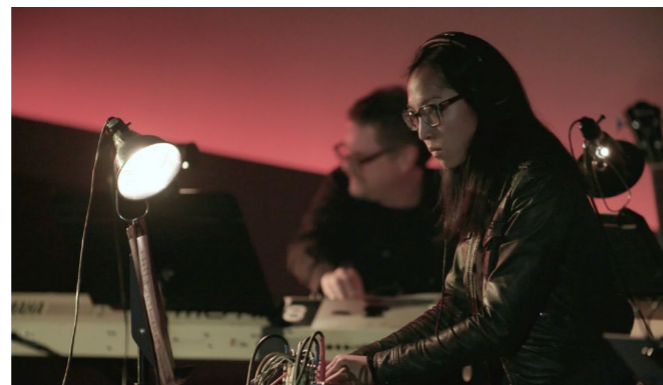
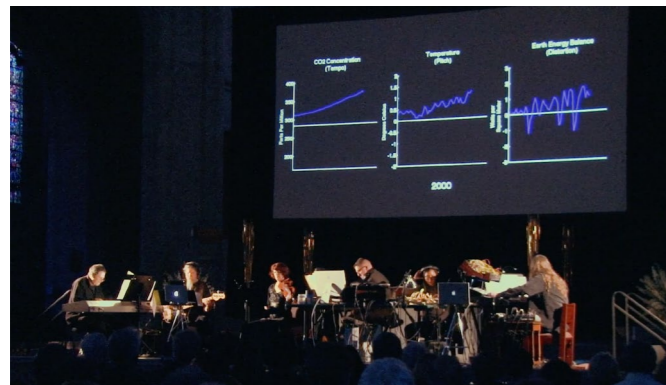
In 2013, Scott St. George, a professor of geography at the University of Minnesota, collaborated with the music student Daniel Crawford to turn 133 years of global temperature measurements into a melody for the cello. Two years later, they wrote a piece for a string quartet and released the score and sound files under a Creative Commons license, so that people around the world could play them.

Dr. St. George said: "Daniel and I have been shocked at how many people continue to contact us because they are moved by the music. When I teach my classes and I put up the latest temperature plots, I don't get that kind of reaction from my students. Graphics just don't land with the same impact."

133 years of global temperature :

<https://ensia.com/videos/a-song-of-our-warming-planet/>

<https://climatemusic.org/what-we-do/>



Photos: stills from The ClimateMusic Project promo video <https://vimeo.com/261202851>

Davos 2025

#collaboration #artwork #community #tech #design

The opening concert of the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2025 merged AI-generated immersive visuals, electronic soundscapes and orchestral music, with the theme of Antarctica and the melting ice caps. In alignment with the UN's declaration of 2025 as the International Year of Glacier Preservation, the concert spotlighted the urgent environmental crisis facing Antarctica, home to 91% of the world's glaciers.

The Davos 2025 concert brings together original music by Michael Kamm and Tim Allhoff, mixing electronic sounds with classical and jazz influences. Performed by the Morphing Chamber Orchestra, the show features artists like Ane Brun, Jeremy Dutcher, and Danielle de Niese, adding emotional depth to its climate message.

A major highlight is Refik Anadol's stunning AI-powered artwork, turning real glacier data into breathtaking digital landscapes.

When technologies such as AI, machine learning and data visualization are combined with music and song, the message becomes emotionally charged, resonating deeply with us. This fusion connects both our hearts and minds, amplifying the urgency of the climate crisis and creating a profound, lasting impact that stirs our emotions and drives us to act.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJjmEo9kByk&ab_channel=WorldEconomicForum



Photo: Refik Anadol Studio



Photos: Stills from live performance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJjmEo9kByk&ab_channel=WorldEconomicForum

FrauVonDa Collective

#artwork #science #collaboration #community #activism

FrauVonDa is a Berlin-based intermedia/ contemporary music collective with Claudia Van Hasselt and Nicolas Wiese as the artistic and project leaders, that merges science, art and society in an interactive and immersive way. The projects of the collective, which has been in existence for over 10 years, are fundamentally based on in-depth musical, scientific and historical research. Most recently, in cooperation with the Biologiska Station Husö/Åland Islands in the Finnish-Swedish Baltic Sea (2021-23) and currently with the Leibniz Institute (IGB) at the Oder river.

An important aspect of the research is the contact and exchange with the local population and the emphasis on multi-perspectivity, especially on controversial topics. To this end, they travelled from the source to Szczecin along the Oder, stayed in private accommodations, met artists, had chance encounters that developed into collaborations. The collective takes into account the diversity of views and artistically creates a community space that brings together people who otherwise rarely meet: Scientists, historians, social researchers, the audience, together with the guest artists and the artists attached to the collective. The final interactive concert format is new: an idiosyncratic mixture of composed contemporary music, free improvisation, sound art, video art and talks on the Oder integrated into the concert. What is unique about this is that the talks themselves become a performative art form and, as quasi ready-made pieces, become part of the overall musical

composition of the concert. The musicians enter into a multilingual exchange with the talk guests as equal partners, intervene and contribute to the discussion in a musical / non-verbal way. "On the one hand, we were looking for a way to make the Oder river, which is unknown to many people, accessible; to enable a kind of Oder Community across spatial distances that engages attentively - cognitively but also emotionally - with the topic of the fish extinction in 2022 and existential questions about our self- image as part of the shared environment. It is not about communicating science, but rather about a humanistic approach to combining the most diverse disciplines into a complex understanding."

Through their unique approach, they could reach an audience that did not explicitly come to see FrauVonDa, and received positive feedback about how the scientific facts combined with e.g. underwater field recordings helped to connect to the Oder river. Some got to know the river for the first time, while for some others it awakened deep memories of their childhood. The Nya Åland newspaper wrote about their previous project on the Baltic Sea: "[...] in its most intimate (and heart-wrenching) moments, the work touches the soul with both a sense of responsibility or guilt and an aesthetic experience. It's worth noting that such moments of true musical enjoyment, as experienced towards the end, are not very common in modern art music. It feels like being part of something transformative."



Photos : Janine Escher

KLIMATON

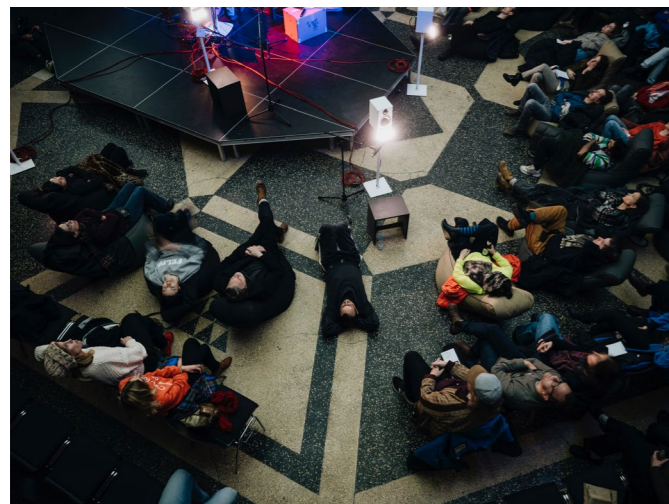
#science #collaboration #artwork #technology #design

Is a research and practice-based project that addresses the problem of communicability of scientific facts in the context of climate change. It questions the nature of doubt in the natural sciences and addresses the lack of a cultural approach to the Earth as a holistic entity. The cross-disciplinary project is aimed at translating scientific knowledge into cultural practice, with a focus on sound and performance, in order to generate new modes of gaining knowledge and gathering together. "We understand the climate crisis also as a crisis of culture. The challenge is to create new ideas and practices that help us to think and feel distant and invisible worlds as an inseparable and essential part of our own world. KLIMATON is a hybrid, located between science, ecopolitics, technology production and art production, based on broad collaborations."

Adnan & Nina Softić, Together with a group of [MOSAiC](#)

scientists, the composer Thies Mynther and a great technical team, have developed a sound instrument that outputs the data from the Arctic as sound - creating a large scale sonified portrait of a disappearing landscape. They have used the largest arctic data to date, collected over a year-long voyage by research expedition MOSAIC (Alfred Wegener Institute), and built an instrument to translate this huge library of data related to a region often described as a "key witness of climate change". It translates environmental data into sound, primarily through modulated human voices, creating an mysterious choral effect where the landscape itself "speaks." This concept inverts the usual human-nature relationship—rather than humans interpreting the Earth, the Earth plays the human voice, offering a haunting reflection on ecological transformation.

<https://softic.info/>



Photos: Nancy Jesse

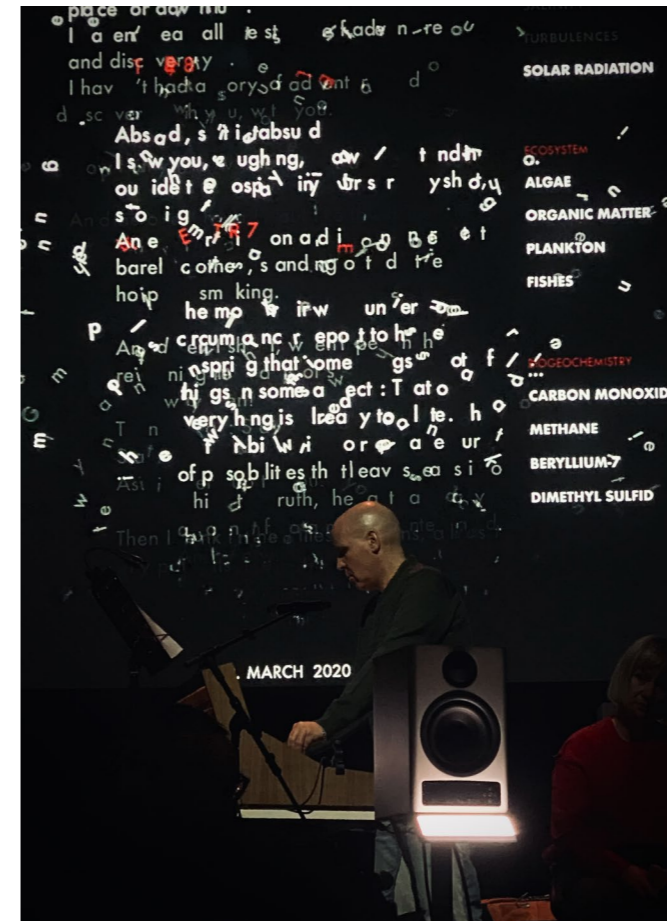
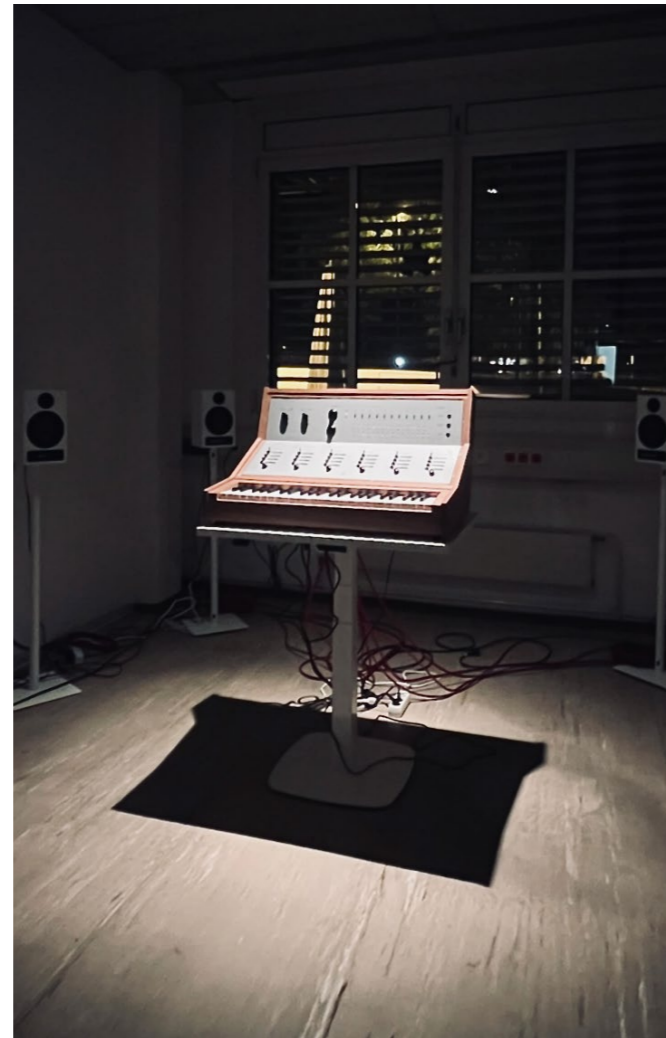
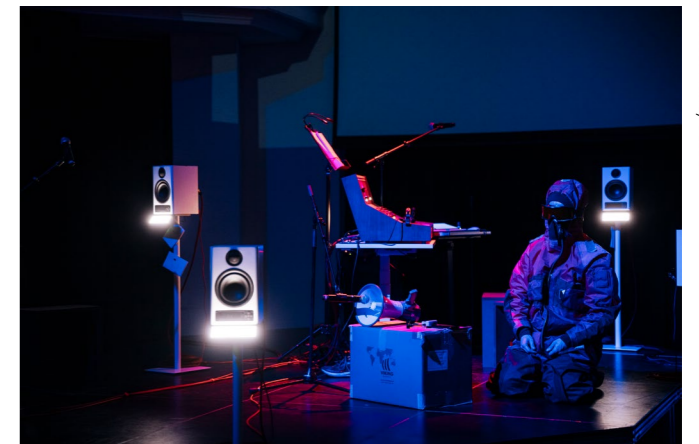


Photo: Sandra Trostel



Photos: Nancy Jesse



Photo: Studio Softic

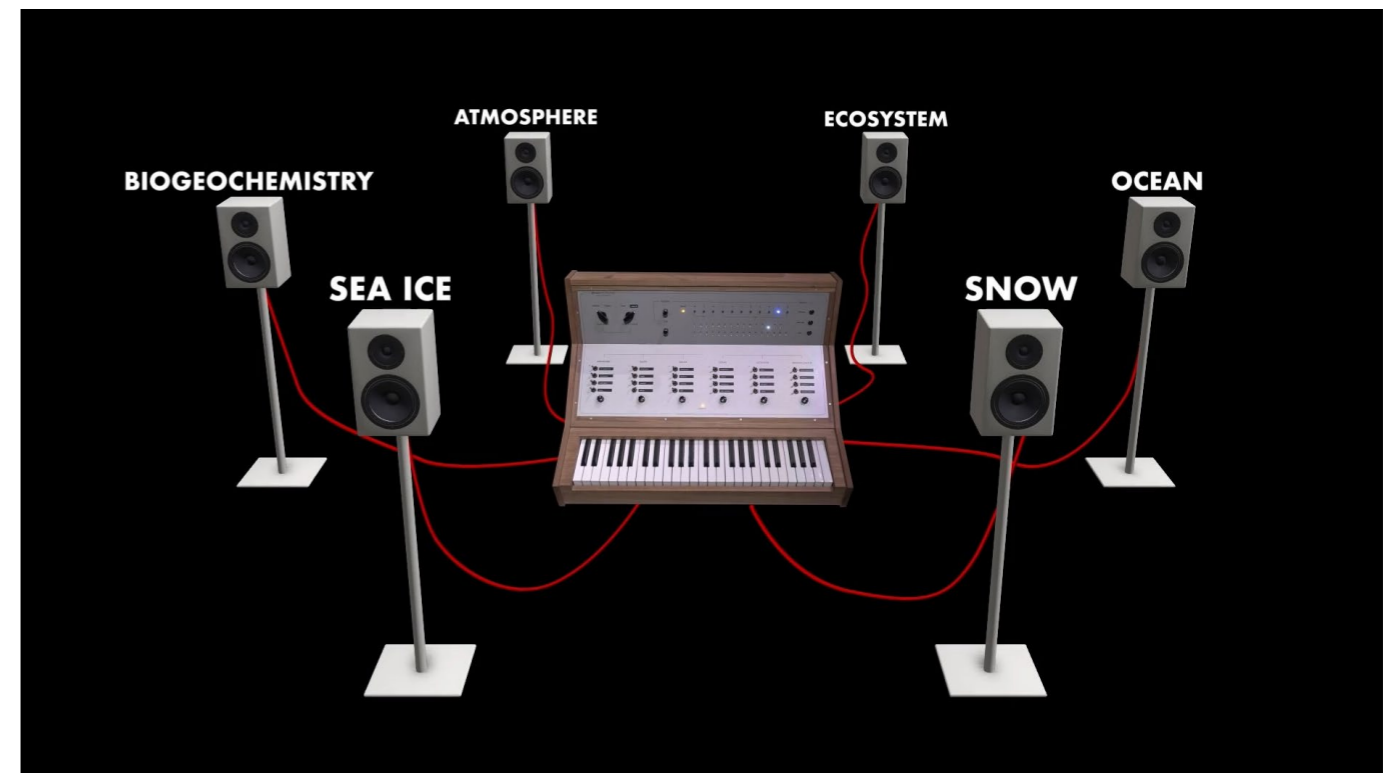


Photo: Komposte

ClimateKeys

#artwork #activism #community

The environmental music project ClimateKeys invites pianists and climate experts from all over the world to come together to raise public awareness on climate change. The series of concerts, starting in autumn 2017, will combine piano performances and open discussions on climate, empowering the audience to better understand the issues and the opportunities behind climate change.

“Artists are useful for filtering climate messages in ways that can be processed more readily through emotions, and direct interaction with experts can inspire the public to make climate change part of their conversations,” “Most people who are asked when they last had a conversation about climate change say they cannot recall ever having talked about climate change, so I decided that my audiences would have that conversation in my own concerts. I found I couldn’t

carry on composing and performing as if climate change wasn’t threatening the very continuation of our civilization,” says ClimateKeys founder, Lola Perrin.

So far, 55 concert pianists from 19 countries, ranging from India to Serbia and from South Africa to China, have joined the ClimateKeys project. They will perform a variety of repertoires ranging from Bach to Bartók, together with guest speakers from all over the world, including experts on climate change and related areas, such as economy, biology, architecture and sustainability, who will facilitate a conversation with the audience.

<https://www.climatekeys.com/>
<https://unfccc.int/news/piano-concerts-to-foster-dialogue-on-climate-change>



Photo: ClimateKeys

Peter Cusack

#artwork

Cusack explores the sounds of diverse environments, examining how human influence shapes these sounds, how they change over time, and what insights might be drawn from them.

Since 2012, one of his ongoing projects has been observing sonically the backyard from his apartment in Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg neighbourhood, an approach that he refers to as “sonic journalism.” Cusack documents the sounds of this urban microcosmos through field recordings, listening back and analysing the changes. For example, certain bird species, that would typically migrate south for the winter, now remain in northern Europe due to the warmer temperatures.

During a group discussion at the Time to Listen event in Berlin 2024, an intriguing idea emerged, inspired by the work of Peter Cusack. The concept was to integrate climate awareness through deep, attentive listening—something that could be seamlessly incorporated into any venue or event. Whether it’s a concert, a talk, or a meeting, a brief intervention could take place where sounds from the surrounding environment or sonified climate data are played, accompanied by a short explanation.

This simple yet powerful approach could make climate advocacy a natural part of any gathering, embedding awareness into everyday cultural and social spaces.



Photo: Misha Maltsev

Jenna Vergeynst: Inclusion of non-human life

#education #community #ethics

At the Time to Listen 2024 conference in Berlin, the Belgian harpist Jenna Vergeynst invited participants in her session to expand the concepts of listening, composing, and making music to include “non-human” or “more-than-human actors.” The inclusion of non-human or more-than-human actors involves recognizing and considering living beings and natural entities that exist beyond human life. This approach aims to understand humans, animals, plants, ecosystems, and even technological or artificial entities as part of an interconnected whole, integrating them into ethical, social, and ecological considerations. The discussion focused on the departure from anthropocentrism. In traditional Western philosophies

and societies, humans are often seen as the measure of all things. The more-than-human perspective seeks to overcome this viewpoint and place other life forms and actors at the centre. Rather than viewing nature as a resource for human benefit, it is understood as a co-actor. Incorporating non-human or more-than-human actors raises new ethical questions: For example, in field recordings, questions arise regarding consent and the rights of the entities whose sounds are being recorded. Equally relevant is the question of how these recordings are used to avoid exploitation or cultural appropriation while preserving the dignity of the documented sounds.



Time to Listen 2024 | Photo: Stefanie Kulisch

Kirsten Reese “Climate justice learning and teaching”

#educating #community

In her workshop, composer, sound artist and university lecturer Kirsten Reese shared her current approach to teaching climate change, climate justice, and sustainability in the context of higher education, especially with students who are studying to become mediators within society - artists, social professionals, and educators. Reese shared a pedagogical framework and 13 key points as “insights” that evolved from the experience of the seminars, focusing on core questions such as: “What is going on? How can we respond? What questions do we need answered? How can we be

inclusive as well as advocates for others? What role can art play?” These steps highlight the role of knowledge acquisition and dissemination in fostering personal commitment while maintaining a broader perspective. The process involves locating individual possibilities, active listening, critical analysis, developing expertise, drawing conclusions and “listening closely to the world.” Art, Reese argued, plays a vital role: It provides an alternative “language” that can reach and inspire even those who feel disengaged or overwhelmed.

Rise

#artwork #collaboration #activism #community

A powerful poetry with music, produced by 350.org to bring awareness on the melting glaciers of Greenland and rising sea level at Marshall Islands. Using a language of legends and their ancestral heritage, the poem of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna and the music video tries to show the impact of climate change on the local lives and the interdependency of our world.

“My sister,
From one island to another
I give to you these rocks
as a reminder
that our lives matter more than their power
that life in all forms demands
the same respect we all give to money
that these issues affect each and everyone of us
None of us is immune
And that each and everyone of us has to decide
if we
will
rise”

<https://350.org/rise-from-one-island-to-another/#poem>



Photos: stills from the music video Rise: From One Island to Another <https://350.org/rise-from-one-island-to-another/>

Nodi Rocks

#artwork #community #activism

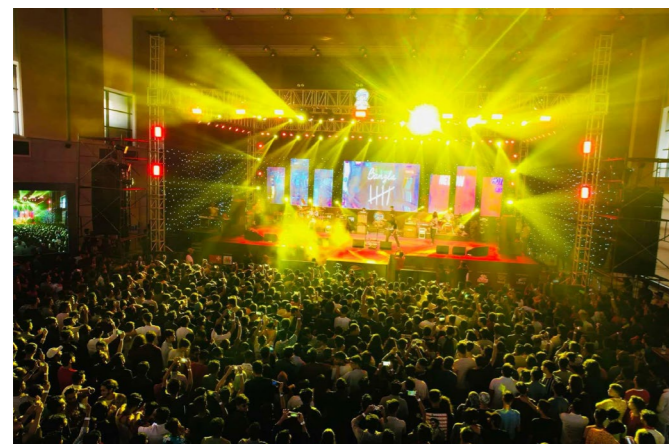
Nodi Rocks is a project initiated by Bangladeshi singer and song writer "Sharmin Sultana", to raise awareness on the critical condition of rivers of Bangladesh. From the 1320 rivers in the country, now only 720 left, and this made the alarm bell for Sharmin to start this ambitious project.

"Nodi Rocks initiative seeks to draw the youths closer to the rivers of the country and motivate them to preserve the climate. In the first season, 7 popular bands of the country composed 7 songs about 7 important rivers of the country, Padma, Kushiara, Sangu, Chitra, Pashur, Dahuk and Buriganga and the songs were filmed on those rivers. Later, with these bands, there were various creative plans around the

rivers, including the Nodi Rocks Mega Concert all over the country, including the capital."

The project gained huge success and reached thousands of youth and pop/rock music lovers of Bangladesh, with live concerts with thousands of audience singing along songs about the love and compassion for the rivers in their country. Although Sharmin struggled afterward with keeping funding her projects, still she is one of the never tiring shining stars on the path of bringing sustainability in music, one by one, step by step, and a great example of how each of us, can get together for a noble cause through music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3c6cOK2rRQ&list=PL3la1zhNI5OTNZtpEKVnZ4PWLgvVxLK8&index=2>



Photos: M R Rana and Team



Photos: M R Rana and Team

Gents

#artwork #collaboration

Copenhagen pop duo GENTS are one of the popular names in Denmark's music scene that have stepped forward to bring sustainability and climate change in their music and performances.

In their recent collaboration, they teamed up with Imagine5, Danmarks Naturfredningsforening (The Danish society for Nature Conservation) and Music Declares Emergency, as the first in a series of events aimed at mobilising action for nature and the climate. GENTS performed a very special set, weaving in bespoke elements inspired by the climate crisis. They also took part in an on-stage discussion with Maria Reumert Gjerding of the Danish Society for the Conservation of Nature, and Lewis Jamieson, founder of Music Declares Emergency. "We don't want to claim to be perfect or claim to have all the answers," GENTS told the sold-out crowd. "This is just us trying to do something. Instead of doing nothing."

"You can easily feel paralysed and apathetic when you just stand alone as a single person or as a small band. So the fact that we could join an existing movement like Music Declares Emergency was just perfect."

"We have a stage and a platform, and if we don't use that platform, then that's also a way of taking a stance."

"There have been all sorts of social issues which music has fought for historically. Today, the situation demands something a little different. It's about understanding and connecting to the conditions for life on this planet."

"You can make a difference as musicians... practical steps like eating vegan, wearing second-hand clothes

and primarily touring by bus. Even if it's just a small difference, then it's meaningful enough for us to keep going."

They also did a concert where all the earnings of the show went to Danmarks Naturfredningsforening. They made two ambient concerts where they used daily local weather forecast to create the melodies for each show. The idea was to make people more aware of the nature around them.

"We have the idea that one of the reasons we are lacking action on the climate crisis is that people in the modern world feels detached from nature."

They used bus for transportation on their latest tour, moving in between Norway, Finland, Bulgaria, Russia, Croatia, Poland, Italy, Czech Republic and Austria.

"We've been playing for ten years and traveling Eastern Europe and Russia has taught us to have a light setup. But we wanted to talk about the tour as part of a green movement. Make people realize how much is actually possible without flying. It's all a matter of seeing the possibilities that are already here. We don't have to stay home and be miserable. But maybe take the train to France when you are going on your next summer vacation:)"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOB9ZyPoRyY&t=910s&ab_channel=Imagine5



Photos: Petra Kleis

Liv Vester Larsen

#artwork #community #education

Liv Vester Larsen is a violinist, vocalist, composer/sound artist, and educator from Denmark. She works across multiple artistic disciplines and genres, both nationally and internationally. Alongside her creative projects, she teaches violin and entrepreneurship at the conservatory.

Since 2018, she has explored the relationship between nature and creativity through the project "Creative – Without Nature?" This initiative has led to concerts, performances, podcasts, and workshops, where local communities are invited into the creative process. Under the theme "Nature and Music," she conducts workshops in natural environments for participants of all ages.

Liv believes that the core of a sustainable project must be present in the music while she tries to keep her own sustainable red lines such as the way she transport

herself, the way she interacts with others, and especially the involvement of the locals and/ or people from other sectors such as farming or mining, and their point of view in the project, is what she believes makes a process sustainable.

Her latest project "Rod i Naturen" is a poetic-musical performance in collaboration with storyteller Maria Junghans, exploring humanity's relationship with nature. Inspired by H.C. Andersen's journeys and stories, they traveled through Fyn's castles and forests, uncovering his early critiques of how humans treat nature. Blending darkness, urgency, and hope, it reflects on environmental destruction while offering a vision for change.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1reHtEVMXo>



Photo: My Lambertsen

Music Declares Emergency

#activism #education #community

Music Declares Emergency (MDE) is a non-profit organization with departments around the world. The organization was originally started in England by a group of artists, musicians and other professionals in the music industry that stand together to declare a climate and ecological emergency and call for an immediate governmental response to protect all life on Earth.

MDE has two main focuses, one is to create awareness for an immediate action towards climate change, and to remind people that there's a big problem out there. Their famous campaign "No music on a dead planet", has succeed to communicate this message globally within the music industry.

Their other focus is to work with large industries and help them to reduce their footprint. Concerts and festivals, with transportation of thousands of people, food, drink and equipment, high energy usage and a large waste, are one of the biggest sector responsible for GHG in music industry. (if not the most!)

Anyone can sign their declaration (no matter if you are an artist or not) and join thousands of artists including Billie Eilish, radiohead, Bjork, Moby, Peter Gabriel, Cold Play and more.

Malene Tofte from MDE in Denmark says:

"Everyone with MDE in any of the 16 countries has not only an ambition but a will to make changes. We are committed to the green agenda and work with all kinds of musicians and music professionals who share our mission. In Denmark we see a great support of what we are doing from not only musicians but also venues and festivals and we truly appreciate that. We expect big and important results and look forward to doing it in unity with the entire music industry."



Photos: Music Declares Emergency

Sweet Goose

#artwork #activism #community #ethics

Chris Mather is a folk musician, singer-songwriter, and storyteller from the UK who mixes modern and traditional folk music. Much of his inspiration comes from animal-people and nature. As an activist for animal rights, his songs often reflect his compassion, respect, and desire for justice for the animal-beings who are widely mistreated and exploited for food.

“ I am a songwriter, but I do love to tell a story. I think we all live and experience life through stories, and they are what make great changes in life. ”

On his first album, he says: “The concept was to tell different stories of different animals from their own perspective. And I wanted to try and get into the mind and the spirit of these animals to convey to people that the disconnect is an illusion.”

From the song “cycle”:

“ Let me fill you in on the holes you are missing in your heart and in your brain
You need to reevaluate the way your thinking about the food chain
Cause its insane how many innocent lives that are born each day ...
Well it's a cruel word that we're living in

but you get to choose if it is something you're complicit in. And if you think that you'll be missing out on

minerals and vitamins
then maybe its compassion
you're deficient in,”

and from the song “burn it to the ground”, the lyrics and music takes a classic-folk revolutionary tone :
“If you change the way we were raised
do you think your conscience will be saved
You can label us as ethical organic or free range
but in the end, it is all the same
Just another way to send us to our graves
...
Burn it to the ground! Burn it to the ground!
Soon the rising embers of compassion will surround”

Sweet Goose Music is a great example of how soothing, beautiful, and uplifting music can effectively communicate one of the harshest realities of modern industry; the animal farming. The ethics of food production and its connection to climate change is one of the most challenging topics to address, yet it also presents one of the most immediate, transformative, and accessible opportunities for change. Sweet Goose has found a way to make this conversation engaging, using music to bring awareness to his fans in a way that feels enjoyable rather than overwhelming.

<https://sweetgoose.bandcamp.com/album/aila>



SWEET GOOSE

FOLK MUSICIAN
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STORYTELLER
ACTIVIST

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Photos: Mort Sparrow

Flesh TV

#artwork #activism #community #education

Flesh TV is a compilation of sound artists and musicians all around the world that through creative practices and thoughtful debates on societal issues (economy, food, energy, health, etc.), looks at the origins and consequences of the separation between humans and animals from various angles.

So far, it's only possible to order the physical package, which is also the interesting part of this release. The package includes a beautifully designed USB that includes both high quality and compressed format of the pieces, a 105 pages printed booklet with a written text by each artist in relation to their approach towards animal right and veganism, their work, life and philosophy, plus the organization they support and why. 50% of the compilation proceeds will be donated to animal rights organizations and activists selected by the artists, and the remaining 50% will be used to cover part of the production costs.

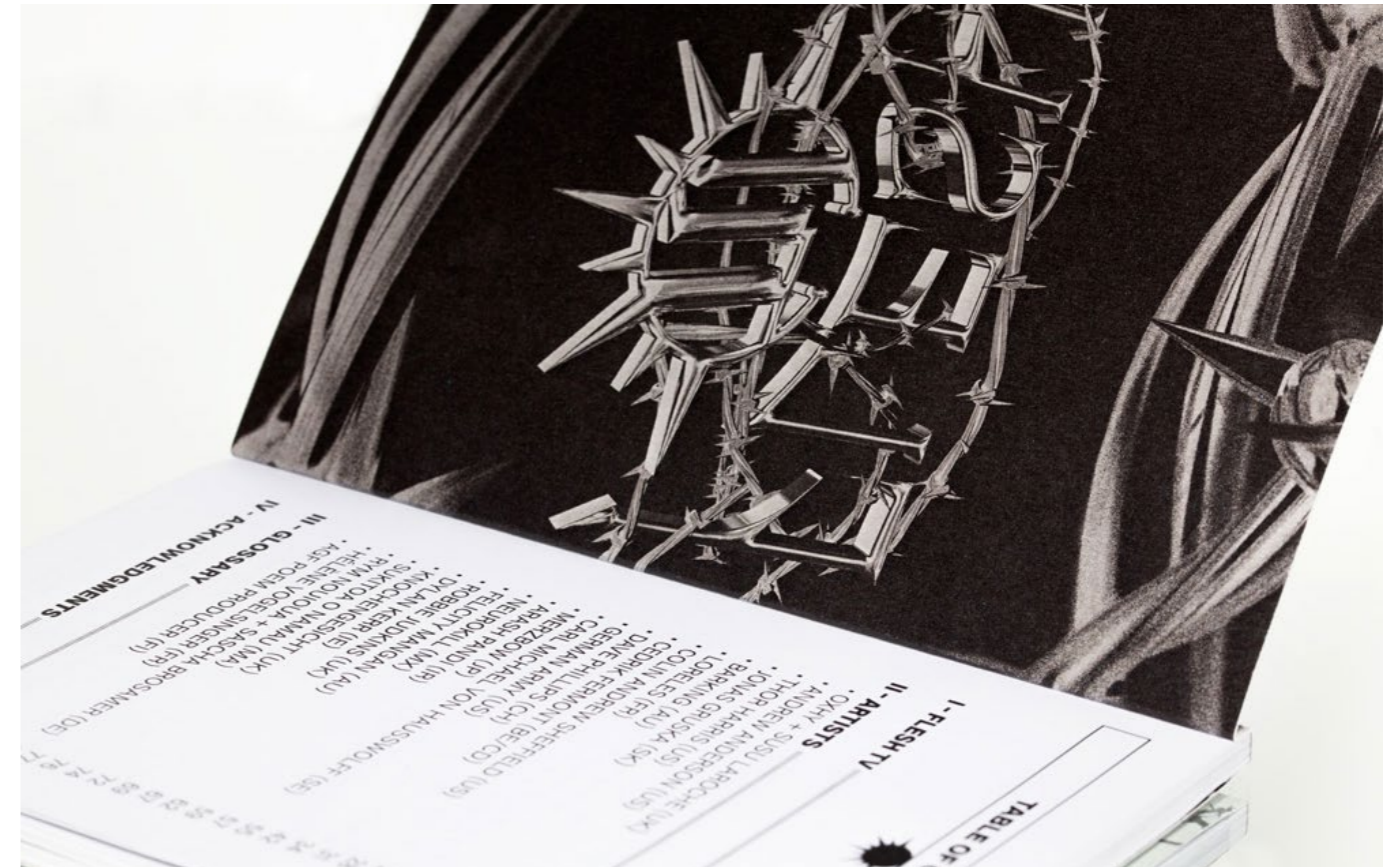
Last but not least, what makes this release particularly striking is a seemingly unusual plastic object included with it, accompanied by a brief explanatory note. This object is a nose ring or anti-suckling device, commonly used in dairy farms on calves (and sometimes adult cows) to prevent them from nursing from their mothers. These devices, which feature small prongs or flat surfaces, make suckling uncomfortable, forcing calves to transition to solid food more quickly. While the dairy

industry justifies their use as a method to accelerate weaning and reduce economic losses, the reality is that they cause distress, discomfort, and frustration, preventing calves from engaging in one of their most fundamental natural instincts—nursing from their mothers.

This is a new form of activism, that instead of taking people (or the audience) of experimental music (or any genre!) to the farms, it brings the reality of an unsustainable and not climate-friendly industry into their homes.

“We aim to explore alternative paradigms and forms of activism using art, research, and critical thinking.” Flesh TV intends to bring together artists, thinkers, writers, activists, and organizations from all around the world who are interested in tackling these topics. Flesh TV endeavors to merge art, research, and activism to encourage a political commitment to animal and nature-related topics within these realms. “As an art platform, sound label, research medium, transdisciplinary political space, we want to create, host, and nourish ideas, representations, attitudes, and behaviors without which the transition to the future we’re envisioning and attempting to incarnate - through our choices and practices - cannot happen.”

<https://fleshtv.world/>



Photos: Ronald Rose

Unrelated Narrations

#activism #community #collaboration

Unrelated Narrations is an artist think-tank put together in 2023 by Art Music Denmark, the Danish Composers' Society and Initiative Neue Musik Berlin, to deploy discourse and action through soft interventions on sustainability platforms within political and cultural events.

Six artists from places as different as Mexico, Faroe Islands, Argentina and USA are asked to come together in an apartment in Berlin for three days to solve the climate crisis!

The group addresses climate change and environmental polycrises from a creative-affective point of view, holding the space between their

extremely different - sometimes incongruous or even incompatible - artistic perspectives, resisting the pressure to collapse differences into the systemic relations that have created inequality, exhaustion and exclusion. Consisting of artists based in Denmark and Germany: Samuel Hertz, Tania Rubio, Marina Cyrino, Miguel Angel Crozzoli, Eduardo Abrantes and Heđin Ziska Davidsen.

They have made presentations at various events: Time to Listen in Berlin 2023-2024, Kulturmødet Mors in Mors 2023, Struer Tracks in Struer 2023, Classical Next in Berlin 2024, Nordic Music Days in Glasgow 2024.



Photos: Stefanie Kulisch

Now or Never Network

#activism #community #collaboration

Now or Never is a network for sustainable and compassionate sound movements, born from the Creative Climate Leadership course for artists and arts organizations in Scandinavia in 2022. Co-founded by Juliana Hodkinson and Arash Pandi, and supported by the Danish Composers' Society, the network's visions is to:

- Raise awareness of the planet's urgent condition and activate empathy towards nature, land, and animals.
- Serve as a hub for creative collaboration between art scenes, farming practices, biologists, activists, and others.
- Initiate political and social movements, while providing funding opportunities.

Now or Never has hosted physical workshops and attended events like Time to Listen, Minu Festival, and Spor Festival, in addition to holding online meetings and workshops.

Juliana has been advancing the sustainability agenda through her network as head of the Danish Composers' Society, and she partnered with Arash to launch this initiative. Arash, who has spent the past four years studying and working as an organic farmer, has joined Juliana in driving the network forward. Despite their other responsibilities, they've kept the network's activities minimal, mindful of the challenges in sustaining such efforts, particularly without long-term funding. The network is now seeking new members to join the core group for future planning and organizational efforts.



Time to Listen 2022, Berlin | Photo: Stefanie Kulisch



Minu Festival 2022, Copenhagen | Photos: Tobias Nicolai

Arash Pandi (Author)

#artwork #activism #education #community

My work around sustainability and climate change sits somewhere between activism and art. My first real engagement with these concerns was with the release of my debut album, *Exotic Paradox*, on the UK-based label for Iranian experimental music, *Zabte Sote*. Thankfully, *Atta Ebtekar* (aka *Sote*), the label's founder, supported my choice of cover photo and album statement, allowing me to take a fairly radical approach. I chose a heartbreaking photograph by Iranian photographer *Golara Sajadian*, depicting a calf lying in a Tehran slaughterhouse. It's one of the most powerful images I've seen that captures the cruelty of the livestock industry—a calf seemingly aware of its fate, having hopelessly surrendered, with a stream of blood and a haunting look in its eyes. Despite this, I felt compelled to use my platform to further address the pressing issues that weighed on my mind at the time:

"We live in a world of paradoxes created by humans. We take care of some animals, while enjoy feasting on others. We're destroying millions of hectares of rainforest each year, to create pasture for beef cattle. We have created the largest mass extinction in 65 million years. Every hour, We kill millions of livestock for food, while 1/10 of our population still live in hunger..." – from the statement

In the following years, together with visual artist *Sløer* (My Lambertsen), I developed an audiovisual performance based on *Exotic Paradox* and other pieces of mine. We continued performing under the same name, but the most impactful adaptation took place at *GAS Festival 2022* in *Gothenburg*, where we actively integrated activism into the performance. *Sløer's* immersive visuals—abstract yet sometimes eerily realistic—were suddenly interrupted as she took a piece of paper and wrote out an animal rights message, projecting it onto massive screens for the audience to see. One of the most striking moments came around the 30-minute mark when we displayed a message revealing the staggering number of farmed land and marine animals taken by the meat, dairy, and egg industries, since the concert had started. We aimed to confront the audience at just the right

moment—when they were fully absorbed—making it impossible to look away. From the feedback we received, it worked. Though the message was harsh and unexpectedly shocking, it forced people to step into reality and reflect on the devastating scale of this industry.

In other works, I sought to highlight the fragility and delicacy of animal life and its deep connection to the surrounding environment. In the piece *Quail Meditation*, I combined field recordings of quails with the sound of a Tibetan singing bowl, imagining how they might perceive the world. Similarly, in *Finally, She Is With Us!*, I blended recordings of forest birds with the sounds of pigs on an organic farm, creating an auditory contrast between the natural habitat pigs should have and their bleak reality—even in pasture-raised settings, which almost never include the forest, their true home.

While actively creating networks in my art and farming environment, fostering dialogues, and lecturing on the inherent violence of livestock farming—toward animals, the environment, and eventually humans—I also sought to incorporate storytelling into my art to address these uncomfortable issues. The result was a 10-minute piece called *I Am an Animal*, blending field and foley recordings, music, sound design, storytelling, and poetry to tell the story of farmed animals: how we perceive it versus the harsh realities of the industry. This became my most successful artistic work in terms of reaching an audience and communicating the ethical message of violence in animal farming, with over 14,000 views on Instagram for the Persian (original) version.

Exotic Paradox album:
https://zabtesote.bandcamp.com/album/exotic-paradox?from=search&search_item_id=1872706301&search_item_type=a&search_match_part=%3F&search_page_id=4061315448&search_page_no=0&search_rank=1&logged_out_menubar=true
<https://soundcloud.com/arash-pandi/im-an-animal-english>
<https://soundcloud.com/arash-pandi/quail-meditation>



Gård festival 2024, Flensburg | Photo: Nina Weissbeck



Time to Listen 2024 | Photo: Stefanie Kulisch

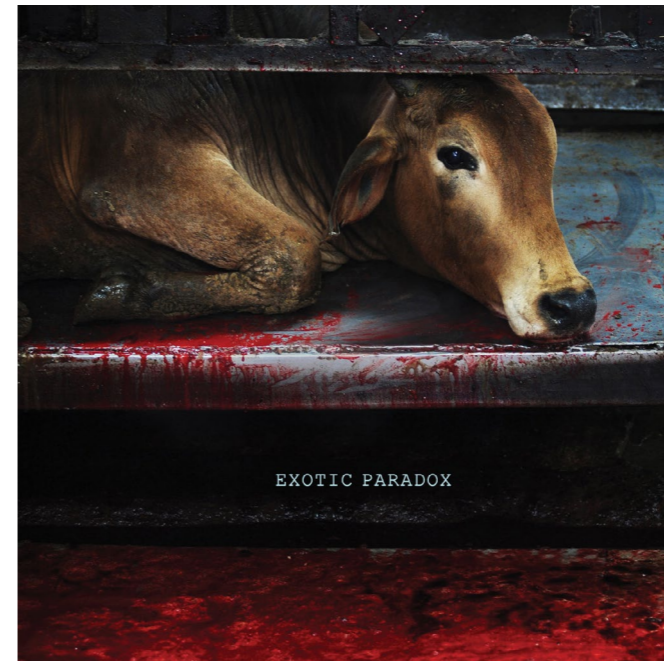


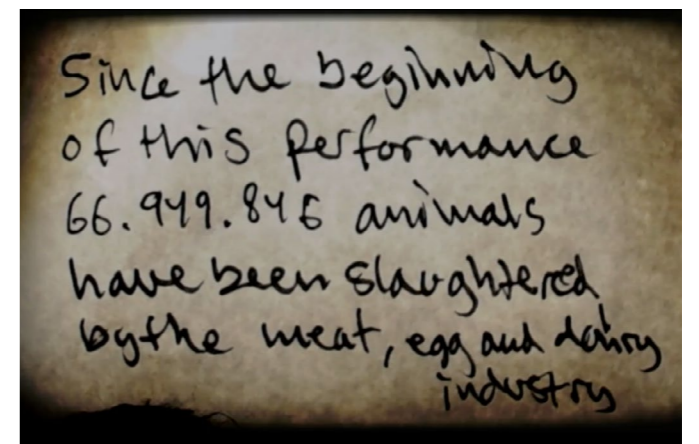
Photo: Golara Sajadian



Live at Radar 2022, Århus | Photo: Bjørn Giesenbauer



Exotic paradox live at Gas festival 2022, Gothenburg | Photos: Emma Axberg



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