



**ENVIRONMENTAL  
ART  
FESTIVAL  
SCOTLAND**  
29 & 30 AUGUST 2015

**OFF-GRID!**

## **Environmental Art Festival Scotland/Off Grid Report**



Urchin by Crafted Space, Wales.

### **Summary**

We would like to thank the Biosphere for their funding for Environmental Art Festival Scotland 2015. Without which the festival would have been unable to go ahead.

The Environmental Art Festival Scotland (EAFS) took place at Morton Castle, Thornhill by kind permission of the Duke of Buccleuch a great enthusiast of the arts. This is the second year of Environmental Art Festival Scotland and we had decided that we would hold the festival at one location this time rather than spread it out across the region although there were some satellite events connected to EAFS. Part of this decision was in order to discourage a large

carbon footprint and the other reason was so people could come together as a community to discuss ideas about our landscape and environments future. The festival took place within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and the landscape around Morton Castle and further afield (around 20 miles) was used for artworks and journeys to the festival which had been developed by local artists who wanted to celebrate their love of the land.



### **The Journey**

Back in March we set up a company for Environmental Art Festival Scotland, which comprises of Jan Hogarth of Wide Open and Matt Baker of the Stove. However the creative production group for the festival is a wider group including Mike Bonaventura from the Crichton Carbon Centre, Andrew Lyons from International Futures Forum, Leah Black from Spring Fling and Robbie Coleman, Environmental Artist.

When we heard we hadn't got our Creative Scotland funding we asked ourselves, partners, funders and the arts community if they wanted us to proceed with the festival on the understanding of commissions being reduced and everyone needing to put in lots of unpaid work to ensure the festival happened. We all decided we did want to go ahead and worked extremely hard to deliver a fantastic festival. However it meant there had to be some very fast rethinking and re-imagining of how it would work. We had successfully secured funding from the Holywood Trust for 5 interns to work with us and their role would become very important to the whole festival's nature opening the arts up to another voice. Meanwhile artists demonstrate their huge generosity of spirit in creating artworks with a production fee rather than a full commission fee. The festival programme included international art but had a larger proportion of experimental artworks and environmental art by Scottish Artists and artists working in Dumfries and Galloway. The festival demonstrated the huge amount of talent here in the region and Scotland. The money from the Biosphere funded local artists and work related to landscape. Many artists actually live and work out of the Biosphere.



This re-imagining was the work of Robbie Coleman, Matt Baker and Jan Hogarth connecting artists, academics, scientists, countryside experts and creatives with the vision for the festival. The festival was an artwork itself it was a collective collaboration as well as an event that celebrated artworks which connected with environmental issues and the land. The themes:

“Generosity as a way of understanding the world” and the young peoples project “Disconnect, reconnect and redefine your future” became very strong themes. We all connected the festival with our own individual networks pulling knowledge and experience.

The producers spent much time on site exploring the lay of the land to ensure the artworks that were developed were integrated within the landscape context rather than just dropped into sites.

The EAFS team worked intensively over the summer to deliver Environmental Art Festival Scotland for the end of August 2015 on a very tight budget. The result was a festival that has been hailed as a great success both artistically and in terms of engaging the local community. Many people described it as transformational and like no festival/art actions and events they had experienced before. The quality of the artwork and art experiences.

The atmosphere on the site communicated the sense of generosity and collective concern for living a better way in the future. The festival achieved a cross generational feel which is recognized as very difficult to achieve this added to the positive atmosphere.

## Infrastructure



The infrastructure on site, the mapping and signage of the site was very unique and very much the brainchild of Robbie Coleman and Matt Baker supported by interns Katie Anderson and Daniel Leigh. The EAFs post office, which was the information point, was carefully considered to work aesthetically with the site and to be welcoming, cool and user friendly. A positive experience at this point was crucial to the visitor or participant being in a positive mental space to enjoy and engage with the artwork. On our evaluation reports the feedback about the warm and welcoming atmosphere created by volunteers and interns was excellent. Robbie Coleman is an artists who creates experiences and temporary spaces within the landscape.

The mapping of the site and the presentation of the information material and signage was the work of Matt Baker and the intern team. Matt has as an artist got a long standing interest in drilling down through the layers of the landscape and revealing place.

The producers and orchestrator worked creatively, rather than taking on a project and events management role. We believe this was one of the reasons EAFs had a unique dynamic.

### **Artworks Creative Investigations, Adventures and Journeys in Landscape**



The Art of Expedition by Ula Jero and Jen Wilcox

The artists who came forward and were selected to create environmental art for the festival are all excited, inspired and in the case of some practice deeply connected with the landscape and concerned about its future. The issues although very serious were presented in an accessible and playful way. This



meant the public could engage with the subject on the level they felt comfortable with.

The artworks supported were as follows:

- **Hand Held Journey** by Artist Jim Buchannan, a labyrinth and drop-in labyrinth making workshop. This was well attended and produced some beautiful outcomes for people.
- **Dark Room** by Foco/Phoco, which were interactive photography experiments and a dark room in a bothy in the landscape above Durisdeer. They enjoyed being in this remote location and participants enjoyed the engagement the with the landscape.
- **The Terrestrial Sea** by Emma Dove and Mark Lyken. A film Installation located in a barn at Morton Mains farm adjacent to Morton Castle. This was a visually rich feast located in a farm outbuilding. A quirky location for this work.
- **The River of Fire** by Jules Cox, a public barbeque artwork and bread oven located in the heart of the festival site at Morton Castle, Creating a community gathering space and nurturing space. The barbeque was a hub during the festival and the goodwill from Jen and Jules and constant production of very high quality food was very unique. There were no catering vans allowed on site so the river of fire was the food nurturing heart of the festival.



Bellmouth Papercone by Oceans All Over

- **Sensing Life** by Bill Coleman, a public workshop by Internationally renowned dance artist to explore space and feel the world around them.
- **Urchin** by Welsh environmental artists, Crafted Space. Water born interactive sculpture located on the Loch of Morton Castle. The urchin was visually stunning in that location and people from the main site could watch the urchin perform and move in the water.
- **Experiment at 14 Watermeets** by Minty Donald and Nic Millar. Itinerant artist actions and installation linked to fireside conversation. Linking waterways within the landscape with installation of water bottles on site. They installed the water bottles on posts at the main festival site creating conversation and curiosity about water and environment.



- **Quest** by environmental artist Jan Hogarth supported by Sheila Pollock, Katie Anderson, Daniel Leigh, and the region's riding community. Live art event, which brings sacred water with healing properties over the hills by horseback from Moffat to Morton Castle to signify healing and support the prophecy aspects of the fireside conversations. The project linked 5 riding communities from Nithsdale and Annandale connecting for healing purposes rather than feuding as had been the case historically. The project explored ritual and tradition engaging another audience for the arts.
- **Zero Footprint** by Ted Leeming and Morag Paterson, a photographic exhibition and public workshop in the landscape. Ted and Morag had a photography exhibition at Thornhill in Thomas Tosh as part of one of the Satellite events.

- **Flux Chamber** by Kate Foster, Susan Waldron and Dr David Borthwick. An interactive walk and carbon exploration within the landscape. Highlighting the scientific way of seeing the land.
- **Bellmouth Papercone** by Oceanallover is a one off performance about speaking and listening. It takes its inspiration from papercone sound systems, migrating eels, theories of accelerated expansion in the universe. As usual the performance was visually rich and responded imaginatively to the site and the audience. There was a wonderful soundscape also.
- **The Art of Expedition** by Jen Wilcox, Ula Jero, Lorraine Ishak, Alan Cameron, Liam Paterson and Douglas Wilcox. Artist's expedition with interactive orienteering and events. This art activity explored survival was located on the Kettleton reservoir creating a spectacular backdrop.
- **Conspectus** with Alec Finlay, David Borthwick and Professor David Munro. An art performance sited in a single viewpoint that offers a view of hills and mountains, exploring place names and their sound and origins. A really high quality thought provoking performance collaboration throwing a light on the layers of landscape.
- **Lessons Learned in the Konigsforst** by Dr Chris Dooks. A soundwork installed in the open landscape. A personal account of a pilgrimage that was taken by the artist, which explores a medical condition. Subtle but reflective when listened to in this beautiful landscape.
- **Burleywhag** by Alyne Jones an installation of her archive explores the relationship between people and the land and the indigenous knowledge collected. A poignant experience stimulating discussion about landscape change.
- **The Land of EAFS** by Andy McAvoy who has creatively interpreted the landscape and activities of EAFS and incorporated element of the past history of the place and created some beautiful maps which are on the EAFs web site and available in the 'Interesting Times' newspaper.
- **Rift Valley Ramble** by Ronald Turnbull was an art, talk, walk. Ronald is a hill walker with a special interest in the rocks and geology of the UKs mountains.
- **Out of the Blue** by Colin Tennant is an installation of a photographic work in the landscape, on the Mitchellslacks route. The work connects the fishing industry in Dumfries and Galloway to the source of the streams, it is linked to an installation of large works on the M75 motorway.

- **Songlines Through the Land** by the Cairn Corus is a choral walk which explores songs strongly rooted in place through interpreting traditional songs in innovative ways.
- **Walking with Old Maps** by David Munro, This will be a guided walk using old maps from 1740 onward looking at the patterns of landscape change. Professor Munro is archiving all the old maps from Buccleuch Estates.
- **Time Travelling in Maps** with David Munro, Durisdeer on the Sunday with maps relating to the surrounding landscape.
- **Mercator Magic Ring** by Inge Panneels and Karolina Maciagowska. Whoever wears the ring is bestowed power to change the world, what would you do with thirsty seconds of world power? The ring is part of the Map-i:Blue Marble exhibition.



### **Campfire Tales**

5 campfires were held on the Saturday evenings, which were curated, and addresses different aspects of life, the universe and everything. Artists, scientists, thinkers, mystics and members of the community hosted the campfires. They were very thought provoking and was a magical experience sitting under the full moon with the glow of the other campfires all around.



**EAFS Unicorn** by EAFS recharge team and created by Jan Hogarth. The Unicorn, an ancient symbol of transformation, is both an art project aiming to give people hope for the future and a way to engage the wider community in the festival. He became a social media sensation (see marketing section). Appearing at local events on the run up to the festival such as Dumfries show and Nithraid. He is now the symbol being used for the “Massive Outpouring of Love” refugee campaign in Dumfries. So interns of “feel good” factor he was also highly successful.

He was conceived to engage a younger audience with the landscape. Youth Worker Debz McDowall was passionate about the fact that young people do gaming much of the time and live in another world, a world that does include history and mythology in it. Therefore the creation of the unicorn created a bridge between this virtual world and landscape. In mythology the unicorn is a shy creature who hides up in the forest and only makes an appearance for beautiful young girls!! The Unicorn was closely associated with the land and when MSP Joan McAlpine got her photography taken with him we ensured that the message that went out was one of healing the land ahead of the festival.



### **Marketing**

This year EAFS learned the importance of a full range of marketing functions. Due to limited time and financial resources, we did not approach this year from the traditional standpoint of setting aims and objectives in a marketing context that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, or time

manageable, however we analyzed each decision by these criteria as the festival progressed. This has allowed us to be fluid and to follow the most appropriate strategies as they apply given the almost experimental nature of our engagements. This indicates that we have been breaking new ground in a lot of ways, by essentially testing the relevance and importance of various symbolic concepts on the public in Dumfries and Galloway, and then beyond.

Our statistics from Social Media Insights and Analytics suggest that our promotional stunts have been incredibly well received, with post-festival post reach hiking exponentially to above 57,000 reached within the space of 48 hours, and gaining favorable reception internationally. This has taught us that our intuitions concerning our target markets have been correct- we are in a position where we are able to present new materials and concepts in an aesthetic way to gain and hold public attention. Feedback from evaluation cards at the festival has suggested that while the EAFS website was visually striking, the information has been reported to have been confusing to some users- this could be a suggestion that large chunks of information were following abstract concepts and not necessary information, thereby confusing to the passive observer. We have considered these responses and plan to review web text in the future to be more user friendly.

This year's press coverage was extensive, with EAFS making three national newspapers for the festival weekend, and also gaining a number of features in local media outlets. This reflects the consistency and persistence of our press strategy, which involved writing press releases and sourcing very particular visuals from aesthetically sensitive photographers- this process was facilitated by studious attention to a documentary and natural style of photography, which accentuated our community and grassroots ideals while paying fastidious attention to demographics extrapolated from our social media analytics, the general idea was to create a means of promoting information which was open and not specifically geared at any one market in particular- not least of all because EAFS is intended to be a catalyst for uniting typically 'different' communities under a common hospitable circumstance. This meant that each stage of the marketing process was subject to very specific analysis and extensive editing to ensure reasonable mid-points and neutrality was met- the measured successes of each marketing function taught us to appreciate this editing process more, and to fully embrace a more holistic approach to PR and marketing.

The benefits of this approach are evident in the difference in percentage of people engaged in different age brackets compared with the previous festival, i.e. this year only 20% of evaluation respondents were aged 55 or above, and 51% were under 45 years of age- an indication that EAFS widened and diversified its market this year, particularly in terms of engaging younger people. A keen attention to the symbolic value of different aesthetics and ideals was a crucial element in framing marketing messages, which promoted creativity as a solution to environmental concerns. It was a particular focus to appeal to popular culture representations of natural living, although reimagining these concepts in a highly unique and more factually grounded fashion. A particular example of this would be how we adopted a visually and

aesthetic driven approach to Instagram posts (familiar and omnipresent in youth culture) but anchored this to specific messages about environmental impact and climate change. This was a delicate undertaking which required fluent understanding of pop culture imagery in order to make a seamless and appropriate statement.

Our ambition to facilitate this sense of transformation in attitude seems to have been successful, with plenty of people feeding back that they feel changed and more conscious for having visited EAFS- “Such a lot of hard work put into this, and it was greatly appreciated. I feel I’ve come home a wee bit changed! Relaxed, happy, and more in love with art and the countryside. Thank you from my heart!”

We achieved around 1000 visitors to Environmental Art Festival over the weekend and associated activities. Considering we had started marketing the event only a month or so before this was a very good result. We engaged many many more people via the web and social media.

### **Marketing of the Landscape**



I worked closely with the marketing team looking at developing a theme that would connect people with the land which emerged to be “disconnect, reconnect and redirect your future” This theme was carefully developed to again encourage people to enjoy the landscape and to disconnect from electronic devises.

In relation to press coverage and marketing for the Biosphere, our first press release incorporated some really beautiful photographs by Colin Tennant of our young peoples project called EAFS recharge within the landscape with



Nic Coombey of the Biosphere. The images by Colin Tennant showed off the landscape and aimed to encourage an engagement of landscape by young people.

The Biosphere had its own web page on the EAFS web site and the logo was incorporated in everything we put out. The newspaper titled "Interesting Times" was very much about the art, the land of EAFS within its landscape context and how we deal with climate change and the role of environmental art in that.

EAFS was launched by the minister for the environment, land reform and climate change, Aileen McLoed. Again putting the landscape very much at the heart of everything.

### **Landscape Discussions**

The topic of the Biosphere and how we live as a community in this challenging landscape environment was interwoven throughout EAFS, through the art projects, the creation of a temporary community, the journeys, the engagement with the land via the people working on EAFS, the discussions with the estate with the farm manager and the negotiations with farmers and gamekeepers. Then there was the discussion which took place during EAFS about the landscape and its future. In "Interesting Times" there were a number of very informative articles that contextualized this time for us by those involved in the debate, including:

*The Landscape Around Us* by Chris Miles of SNH

*Disconnect, Reconnect and Redirect Out Future* by young marketing intern Ruaridh Thin-Smith

*They Think its All Over: It isn't Necessarily* by Professor Mike Bonaventura of the Crichton Carbon Centre.

*Navigating the Future* by Andrew Lyons of the International Future Forum.

*Art and Ecology* by Chris Freemantle founder of ecoartscotland.

The newspaper also had informative articles on the artworks and maps and information about how to use the site.

The Campfire Tales continued the discussion about between artists, scientists, thinkers, mystics and members of the community on diverse subjects such as water, navigating the future, on life and death and time. Again keeping that debate and discussion flowing about where we go from here.



COLIN HATTERSLEY

**Rallying call** Ross Hyslop, the cornet of Dumfries, on his mare Annie at the launch of the Environmental Art Festival Scotland 2015 at Morton Castle, near Dumfries. The two-day celebration of the arts and the environment starts today.

EAFS worked with Matthew Shelley on press coverage and successfully secured coverage in the Scotsman, Glasgow Herald, The Telegraph, D and G life two months running, Dumfries and Galloway Standard three weeks running, Annandale Herald, Moffat News and Annandale Observer as well as many online publications including ITV, Creative Scotland and BBC websites. We had good coverage on BBC radio Scotland and Alive Radio. We think the value of this coverage was in the region of £15,000.

There were a number of photographers who have been documenting EAFS both on the run up to the event and on the festival weekend. They were; Colin Tennant, Alison Boyes, Alex Boyd and Andy Jardine.

The Environmental Art Festival Web site is being updated with images from the weekend. Please see [www.environmentalartfestivalscotland.com](http://www.environmentalartfestivalscotland.com)

Report created by Dr Jan Hogarth and Ruardhi Thin- Smith.