Creativity for the Climate
A Generative Process

CO-DESIGNED WITH ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE 2020

SAVANNA HARVEY

Savanna Harvey’s artist-in-residency is part of the FUTURES/forward community-engaged arts mentorship program, funded by the McConnell Foundation. FUTURES/forward is run by the International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC) and Judith Marcuse Projects (JMP), an arts organization with a 40-year history in Canada and abroad and a pioneer in the field of ASC. Special thanks to Susanna Uchatius for her mentorship.
I am writing to you from Mohkínstsis-Calgary in Treaty 7 territory, also known as the province of Alberta.

I grew up in Treaty 6 and 7 territory, in a petro-state subject to a boom and bust economy with a cultural identity crafted by oil and gas marketing.

I went to school in the Black Gold educational division. Buildings are named things like the Cenovus Energy Centre and the Repsol Sport Centre. Our sports teams are the Oilers, the Oil Kings, the Prospects, the Roughnecks.

It’s complicated being an artist in this ecosystem amidst a climate emergency. Try to stage an art-for-the-environment intervention, and you get yelled at in the streets. The publicly-funded Canadian Energy Centre is a self-proclaimed War Room in support of national oil and gas, on top of billions of dollars in corporate subsidy packages. Our energy sector is not transitioning fast enough and our economy has failed to diversify time and time again. It gets especially messy when we acknowledge this is also a conversation about people's livelihoods and family incomes.

Climate crisis, energy transition, petroleum phase-out - all while protecting the vulnerable and leaving no one behind...it often feels overwhelming. What gives me hope is seeing the many different faces who do come to the table, working together. Policy-makers, water and land protectors, scientists, business-owners, farmers, politicians, students, families...and people like me: artists.

This workbook contains a generative process designed to grow information into creative expression. Each chapter starts with a book and an idea. Read one book or read them all. Try out one activity or try them all - in order or at random. There is no right or wrong way, no good or bad result. Sow seeds of knowledge and see what strange little plant pops up out of the soil. You don’t have to understand it right away, just trust that it has a vital role and is part of an interconnected process that is larger than you can perceive in this moment.

I struggled, and honestly sometimes still do struggle, to understand my place and contribution to the movement. But after a couple years, I think I’m starting to figure it out:

Create joy! Create rebellion! Create dissent! Create mischief! Create never-ending shouts against the silence and silencing. Create new futures. Create art because we are destroying entirely too much on this planet. Grow and nurture and cultivate your soul, as well as your permaculture.

Rewild your hearts,

Savanna Harvey
About Savanna

Savanna is a gun-for-hire producer of the broke and beautiful. She is an organizer of secret midnight meetings, an instigator of resistance, and a recruiter of citizens. As a creator-performer, she has toured Canada with her weird little shows about garbage puppets and science ghosts. She is a loner and co-conspirator. She is a killjoy feminist, a recreational mad scientist, and a ruthless proponent of kindness.

Savanna joins YCL as our artist-in-residence to introduce arts methodologies into climate action work. She will be sharing a reading list of research and designing accompanying activities to facilitate the growth of these environmental texts into imaginative process. Learn how to apply ecojustice theory into creative practice.

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Savanna lives and creates on Treaty 6 (amiskwaciwâskahikan-Edmonton) and 7 (Mohkinstsis-Calgary) land. She believes indigenous SOVEREIGNTY and RECONCILIATION should be the cornerstones of climate action and that environmentalism without intersectionality is just white SUPREMACY with trees.
"All these people were running from the farm. So for a lot of African Americans back then, the wild, the forest, the woods— that's the boogey land. We don't want to go there, we've had negative experiences there. Our forefathers died in that swamp: our forefathers were tracked down and hanged from the trees in those woods. [...] When African American farmers were freed, they wanted land, they wanted a mule, and all the rest. The Jim Crow era, though did a lot of damage by dissuading African Americans from making a living through farming, whereas the Europeans who were still coming in on boats to Ellis island were given access to land." (173)

When we collaborate, we inevitably bring our whole selves to the team. We cannot compartmentalize who we are. That "who" is a complex being with a unique background of lived experiences that shapes how we see the world, how we see ourselves in the world, and how the world sees us.

When collaborating on an artistic project, artists navigate the inter- and intra-personal. Making art is rewarding; art-making can connect us to something bigger and more meaningful than ourselves, but art should never be at the expense of the people making it. We need to create through processes that care for and honour the people in the room. We need processes that are regenerative and sustainable.

In North American theatre, we are starting to have these conversations. We are starting to question toxic norms in our organizations and communities, starting to ask why certain people are consistently missing from the room (or leaving the room), and starting to interrogate the discrepancy between our professed values and the systems in which we work.
As you start this workbook (or any process), it's a good practice to consider not just the "what" but also the "who," the "why," and the "how" of what you're doing. In an artistic process, we have Room Agreements, but you might be more familiar with the terms Charter, Mission/Vision Statement, or on a personal level, Intention Setting. How do you usually start projects or processes? Do you take time to plan your "who," "why," and "how"?

**Activity: Drawing Future Growth**

1. We start by getting to know one another and getting to know ourselves. In the panels below draw yourself as a comic book character and tell your story. Many characters in comic books are ordinary people, so you can include aspects of your childhood, places and people that shaped you, what a typical day-in-your-life looks like etc. There's no wrong way to tell your story and introduce yourself. This is the first part of the "who."
2. To set up the next series of panels, we're going to articulate our "why." List 3 reasons why adding more creativity to your work could be beneficial to you.

3. Look at your "why"s and think of behaviours or habits that will both help and hinder you in this process. For the next series of panels, assign a row for each of your "why"s. Draw a square for each "why," where you are enacting a helpful behaviour you already do. In the second square, show how you will positively counter-act your hinder behaviour.
Try making one big collection of “why”s for the group. This can be built out of your individual “why”s and you can also add new “why”s that may emerge out of the group’s collective desires. You can record your collective “why”s below. If you are in a group setting, share your stories with one another. You can also share your "why"s and your help and hinder panels, if you're comfortable doing so. Sharing our goals and plans with other people can help hold us accountable and build a support network that increases our chances of success. It can also help us be better collaborators when we understand where we are all coming from, what is important to us, and each of our strengths and weaknesses.
completing this activity solo, try connecting your "why"s to goals or values in your organization, community, family, etc.

Out of your individual help and hinder panels, make a collective list of help and hinder behaviours for the room. Take a look at your collective "why"s and add any new help/hinder behaviours you may need, too. Try drawing panels of your collective help and hinder panels so your group can visualize how you want to work together. If you are doing this activity on your own, think about the ways a group could support your help and hinder panels. How could you ask for help, or name your boundaries in a group setting? Try drawing and visualizing these scenarios.
Even though our intentions are good, we are all human, and we may forget to follow our help and hinder behaviours – or we may lose track of our "why"s over time. So, it's important to check-in regularly to see how we are doing. Come up with a regular check-in process: Daily? Weekly? Monthly? How will you evaluate your success or struggles? How will you track your progress over time? How will you adjust your "why"s or your help/hinder behaviour, as you grow and learn more about yourself and your collaborators?

Think about an endpoint for this process. Completing a project takes dedication, discipline, and a lot of work – even if it is something fun that you enjoy doing. We should remember to celebrate our victories before jumping right into the next project. This keeps us energized and reminds us how far we've come on our journeys. When you complete this process, how will you celebrate and share your growth? How will you maintain the progress that you've made?
“Paul Slovic, professor of psychology at the University of Oregon...is the world's leading expert on the social amplification of risk. Slovic faced an uphill struggle to persuade scientists that our perception of risk is socially formed [and he] identified two main drivers of risk perception: a sense of powerlessness in the face of involuntary and catastrophic impacts, which he called dread risk, and an anxiety that comes from the uncertainty of new and unforeseeable dangers, which he called unknown risk. Dread risk is reinforced by being intergenerational and unprecedented. Radiation is so feared because it involves both types.” (53)

Perception of risk is socially formed. I found this concept so interesting, especially as an artist.

As an artist, this helps me identify a role (socio-cultural influencer) and tactics (risk communication) that I can offer the climate movement. For projects where I want to portray risk to help an audience conceptualize the danger and urgency of the climate emergency, I can incorporate Slovic's Dread Risk and Unknown Risk. This helps me increase the total Risk Perception in the artwork, which in turn contributes to that larger socio-cultural risk perception: the climate zeitgeist.
Activity: Writing Risky Worlds

1. Identify a particular problem you are working on in the climate movement.

I’m working to ________

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2. Think about the consequences of not taking action to fix this challenge from both an environmental and societal perspective.

List 5 examples for each – Societal Consequences and Environmental Consequences.

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We’re going to use your environmental challenge and its consequences as the foundation of a fictional world. This world could be the universe of a story/poem/song, could be the setting of a drawing, could be the environment for a dance piece: whatever medium you’re most comfortable in or would like to explore. We’re going to create a Risky World!
3. Recall how risk perception is determined by the combination of Dread Risk and Unknown Risk. Write one of your environmental or societal consequences in the centre circle below. Next, brainstorm how you can attach elements of Dread Risk and Unknown Risk to each of your environmental or societal consequence to help maximize its risk perception in your Risky World. Do this for as many of your consequences as you like.
Now that you have a central problem, the consequences of that problem, and the ways that those consequences can manifest as high risks – let’s think about this world in legendary and myth-making terms. We’re going to record the parable of the Risky World.

Imagine it is 100 years from now. What has happened?

Phrases like “In the beginning...” or “Once upon a time...” can be a good place to start. Describe your world like a myth, legend, or fairy-tale.
Reflection: Writing Risky Worlds

Share your Risky World with the group and explore what you learned from this exercise, as well as ways you might bring elements of it into your own work. The questions below can help you get started, or can be answered if you are working alone.

What parts of your Risky World caused an emotional reaction or created impactful visuals? How might emotions and visuals be used as communication tools?

If safety is the opposite of risk, could you generate a safety perception theory as a counterpoint? What might that theory look like?
Thinking about this new safety theory, how would your Safe World be different? Why might it also be useful to know how to communicate the concept of safety when talking about the climate emergency?

How do you see the theory of risk/safety perception and the visualisation technique of the Risky/Safe World-Building activity affecting your future communication about climate crisis? Which (risk vs. safety) do you think would be most effective and when?
In performance creation, I think a lot about the scenography - as we call it - or the environment of the performance. In traditional design, we create a setting intended to serve the humans onstage and in the audience. Design is inherently anthropocentric, so how can we start considering the more-than-human world in our work?

These questions have been explored in the field of ecocriticism in the arts. Our design attitudes reveal a deeper psychology about our relationship to the natural world. We design surfaces for actors to sit on, doorways for them to walk through, counters for them to lean on. The world is created according to human desire.

Could we instead design worlds that are less environments and more ecologies? What does design look where the world is alive – and not just a two-dimensional, passive backdrop?
How can you start considering the more-than-human world in your work? How can you shift away from thinking about environments and start thinking about ecologies?

Activity: Dancing More-than-Human Ecologies

1. Choose a space, almost any space will do. It can be your living room, a park, a classroom, etc. Stand in your space and observe the elements that define this place. What do you see? Try sketching out a floorplan or drawing a picture of your place.
For the rest of this exercise, it can be helpful to play music. You'll need about 3 songs, instrumental music without lyrics might be best, and about a 1-3 minute duration for each track. You can record your observations at the end of each song in the spaces below.

2. For one song, explore moving through your space. Try moving through the space as it was intended to be used. Try to stay in movement the whole song and really tease out every possible way you might interact with your place.

3. For the second song, try finding new ways of moving through your place — ways your place was not designed for. Feel free to get creative, but don't forget to stay safe.
4. For the third song, expand your awareness beyond yourself and the space. If you are doing this activity in a group, explore this place in relation to other creatures in the room. If you are in a public space, are there other creatures around? How does their presence affect your movement and use of space? If you are alone, can you find traces of other creatures? How does their presence affect your movement through this place.

Reflection: Dancing More-than-Human Ecologies

Share your Dancing Ecology observations with the group and explore what you learned from this exercise as well as ways you might bring elements of it into your own work. The questions below can help you get started, or can be answered if you are working alone.

What made it easy/hard to move through your space? Where can you see anthropocentric design at work?
Where can you see anthropocentric design in the work that you do and in the organizations you encounter? Think beyond physical space and into metaphoric space and structures. How could you adapt these designs to consider the more-than-human world?

What new processes, designed with the more-than-human world in mind, could be incorporated right from the beginning? Can you identify one initiative that you could act on right away?
Communication. Commune. Communion. What a powerful trio. In particularly powerful performances, all three are present. I think about how, at its core, performance is the act of gathering, of being together. And I offer a fourth word: “the common,” which means communal land. How we can nurture such shared, collective endeavors despite our differences?

I work very collaboratively with other artists. So when I reflect on Wagamese’s three C’s, I automatically add in my 4th C: the common – the collective endeavor. Collective-creation art is the progeny of many collaborators joining into community and working towards the collective endeavor – the common – but the first step is still learning how to be one another.

How do we build a strong community foundation when, as individuals, we are all so different? How do we be together with those who are different than us? How do we simply be together in this busy, hectic, constantly pinging world?
Think of someone who you would like to connect with, but have identified differences in opinion or approach as barriers to this connection. We’re going to start with the first C: Communication. In the space below, draft a letter to this person expressing a) your desire for connection, b) the ways you respect and appreciate this person, and c) why it would be meaningful to find common ground. Writing a letter can be helpful for effective communication, because it gives us the opportunity to slow down and choose our words thoughtfully.

How can you foster space and time for acts of communication, commune, and communion? Are you building communities or “individual bands of wanderers”?

**Activity: Composing New Symbioses**

1. Think of someone who you would like to connect with, but have identified differences in opinion or approach as barriers to this connection. We’re going to start with the first C: Communication. In the space below, draft a letter to this person expressing a) your desire for connection, b) the ways you respect and appreciate this person, and c) why it would be meaningful to find common ground. Writing a letter can be helpful for effective communication, because it gives us the opportunity to slow down and choose our words thoughtfully.
2. The second C is for commune. The next part of your letter will be an invitation to come together. Think about the kinds of places and activities that would support being together. This can be a place/activity that would help you understand that person better, help them understand you better – or maybe neutral ground is best? Make sure you check off each element of the invitation check-list below.

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3. There's a missing a question from the previous check-list: How? The "how" of gathering supports the communion. What preparation is required to honour the gathering? This could be ensuring adequate sleep the night before, taking time to centre ourselves, conducting research, or journaling so we feel prepared. What are we bringing into the meeting? Are those the correct offerings for the commune? You can also think about elements of ceremony for the commune itself. Cell phones off?

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4. My additional C, the common, might not happen right away – it takes time to build a relationship. It's a process, but during your commune, listen for those opportunities to reveal themselves. Be open to discovering common ground. Try brainstorming some possibilities below. Start with identifying a parallel value or passion for each of you, and try to imagine a common that would support both of your interests.

It can be helpful coming into a collaboration with offers to start with, but it can also be counter-productive if you're too attached to your own ideas and forget to listen to the needs of the community and collaborators. It needs to be "our" common, not "your" common.

5. If and when you are happy with your letter, consider mailing it. Taking the time to write and send a physical letter is special. It takes extra time and consideration and is more personal than an email. Mailing the letter of invitation can even be part of your communion.
Reflection: Composing New Symbioses

You can choose to share your letter with the group or offer any insights from the process. There are questions below to assist your reflection and discussion process. How do we build communication, commune, communion, and the common into our lives?

Which of the four Cs do you practice most often? Which feel less familiar to you? How can you practice the four Cs more regularly?

Can you think of a time someone facilitated an effective commune? Can you identify the four Cs in their facilitation method?
In our letter writing activity, we practiced the four Cs by addressing someone specific. How might this work if we're trying to bring together groups of people instead of two individuals?

Even applying the four Cs, there may be circumstances that will make connection difficult. These are called access needs. These barriers need to be tackled before commune/communion/common can begin. What might some of these access needs be? Examples could be childcare, a building with ramps/elevators, bus tickets or a ride to the commune, etc. It's considerate to try and anticipate access needs, but it's always a good idea to ask your guest/s prior to joining in commune. And don't forget about your own access needs!
"Glaciers high in the Rocky Mountains, vast tundra, snow, ice and sea: the apex of Canada and the top of the world. Far from industry, automobiles and major cities, these are the last places you'd imagine to find disturbing levels of contamination. But sadly, these cold, remote areas are the unwitting recipients of some of the world's most persistent pollutants. David Schindler has been taking ice cores from Snowdome Glacier, high in the Canadian Rockies, for years. As a new layer of ice forms each year, an annual record of atmospheric pollutants - hitchhikers on the world's winds - is preserved. And the record is an alarming one: pesticides, PCBS, and other persistent organic pollutants are trapped, leaving an ice-bound account of our chemical creations." (74)

As artists, we can still find remnants of past performances in the artifacts left behind: scripts, costumes, stages, sheet music...but these aren't the only things we will now leave behind. We will now be leaving a legacy of indestructible single-use plastics and thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases to mark our passage on this earth.

Art is often associated with the ideas of legacy and artifact. The art object (painting, statue, book) becomes immortalized and revered, finding its way into exhibits and private collections to be preserved for eternity. This new legacy we are leaving as modern humans – the artifacts of climate crisis – will far outlast any museum's or mansion's (ironically named) climate-controlled chambers.

What is the legacy we are leaving behind, and is it one we will be proud of? What are the artifacts we need to be crafting now? Who are they for?
A legacy does not have to be physical, nor do you have to be famous or important to have an impact. Whether we mean to or not, we are in the process of assembling those legacies every day. So, how can we design better histories in the present?

**Activity: Crafting Futuristic Seeds**

This activity is best done in your home where you have access to personal objects. If you're not in your home, you can prepare for this activity by gathering a collection of personal items ahead of time. It would be helpful to have copies of personal objects that you don't mind altering (ex. copies of photos). It might also be helpful to have some craft supplies handy, like scissors, twine, tape, or glue.

1. **Begin by thinking about what kind of legacy you want to leave behind.** What impact do you want to have? What is important to you: what are your values? What do you think constitutes a "good" life? You can capture your ideas below.
2. Now think about what you have done or are doing that is contributing towards your desired legacy. Can you associate actions / projects / moments with your above list? Are there actions / projects / moments that are important to you that don't fit into your initial list? Maybe you have gained a new insight that can be added to your desired legacy list? Try to connect actions / projects / moments to items on your legacy list.

3. With your desired legacy in mind, sift through your home and select a collection of objects that represent elements of your legacy and memories of the actions / projects / moments associated with your future legacy.

4. With your objects before you, craft together a single monument commemorating your legacy on earth. As you assemble your monument out of these materials, you may feel the impulse to add additional objects for structural or aesthetic reasons. Try to include any new items intentionally by asking yourself about what each object represents.
Reflection: Crafting Futuristic Seeds

Present your monument to the group, but it’s okay to keep some things personal, too, if that makes you more comfortable. The following questions will help guide reflection on this activity and how we can apply these reflections into everyday life.

How closely do your actions today align with your future legacy? Are there values, impacts, or other "good" life elements that need more of your attention in order to manifest? Where are the areas in your life where you are already living your legacy?

If you are in a group setting, identify others who share the same values, impacts, and "good" life elements. Are there ways you could work together towards a shared legacy? If you are alone, can you think of people in your life who would make natural legacy collaborators? Can you come up with ways of working together?
What could your monument look like 5 years from now? 10 years? 20 years? What steps do you need to take to start that journey?

What are some barriers you could face as you work towards your desired legacy? These can be internal (what you can control) and external (what you can’t control). Are there steps you could take today that will make overcoming these barriers easier – or completely avoidable – in the future?