



Voyaging with Materials: Poetic Inquiry for a More-than-human Art Therapy

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*“...may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy **fine things**,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—” (Cavafy, 1975)*

Art therapists may buy “fine things” (paper, paints, pens) as art materials, but in an ecological crisis, there are sustainability issues. Our art therapy voyage of encounter with earth’s precious resources is as important as the destination. The life of the materials may extend well beyond the art therapy timeframe and can end up in landfill. Materials exist within an ever-transforming ecosystem and have their own agential and animate lives; working with materials is mutually transformative, with an ecological impact. Our earth gave us this marvellous journey, but what if she has nothing left to give? (Cavafy, 1975)

In an age of human exceptionalism, where the world about us has become an ‘it’ to be traded rather than a ‘thou’ to be communed with, we may have lost our ability to hear the rivers, mountain or sea (Berry, 2011). In the context of a rising movement to support the rights of nature, this workshop aims to honour and foreground the agency, rights and voice of our material collaborators through:

- Making *with* materials as “vibrant matter” (Bennett, 2010)
- Writing *with* materials, playing with a “grammar of animacy” (Kimmerer, 2020).

It will be an opportunity to appreciate and consider our embodied relationship with art materials for more sustainable and reciprocally beneficial encounters with places, creatures and material states of being.



References

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Biography

Adrienne McDermid-Thomas is a lecturer in art psychotherapy at Queen Margaret University. She has an interest in working outdoors and in eco-art therapy. She is currently undertaking a Creative Practice PhD, exploring the process of becoming more ecologically engaged and of potentially 'rewilding' art therapy education.

Pamela Whitaker, PhD, is a lecturer in art psychotherapy at Ulster University. She is interested in contemporary art and creative health, art therapy in museums and galleries, environmental art therapy, the walking studio, and ecologies of care. She co-edited a nature-based art therapy edition of *International Journal of Art Therapy*.

Recent Publications

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