

Harmonising Nature: Developing creative ecologies through an artist residency

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Abstract

The article investigates the connection between environment and creativity through a two week artist residence at Wick Farm in Somerset. Drawing from Haraway, Marchesini, Barad and Csikszentmihalyi, and through a reflective and open methodology and critical exegesis, it explores the ecological dimensions of electronic music production, emphasising how responsiveness to natural rhythms and allowing for serendipitous discoveries has the potential to reorient both maker and listener towards an ecocentric mindset.

Keywords: ecological creativity, kinship, animal onotology, artist residency

The outcome: <https://on.soundcloud.com/FXmphAVKok9BNo1D6>

Introduction

During the first two weeks of summer 2024, I embarked on a two-week artist residency in Somerset to explore ways of responding to the landscape through music production, answering Haraway's call to 'compose with the earth-bound.' (2019). The remote site of the residency gave a utopian access to wildness. The land has long grass meadows, and an ancient woodland sits on the top of the hill out the back of the cottage, home to woodpeckers, honey buzzards and a tawny owl. The barn is home to multiple swallows and swifts continuously dance in the skies above, catching flies. Walks from the site connect across the Somerset levels with its vast grasslands, marsh and rivers, home to abundant wildlife with only small settlements dotted across the landscape.

I was interested to see how my creative practice as a music producer would develop and what work and new creative processes and ideas would emerge from the time and place.

Central to my creative practice is tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis whilst nurturing creativity in myself and others. I feel a strong biophilia within myself and motivation to create beauty. I see this drive as 'teleophoria', one of the four animal ontological principles laid out by the post-humanist Marchesini (2022). Teleophoria explains that all livings have a purpose and a desire

to "search for opportunities of expression in the world" (Veronese 2023), and for challenges that will advance the development of their species. I therefore see my desire to make music as natural as a bee desire to make honey.



Image 2 – Frankie at the gate of the flower garden

My feelings for my surroundings are reflected in Haraway's writing on kinship (2016), the work of eco-poetic artists of the Romantic period (Bate 1991), and inspired by Indigenous communities who have the most significant understanding of how we connect to our environment. Through emotional connection, I feel motivated to protect and celebrate nature and explore my humanity. I strive to encourage this connection in others, for I believe, like Taylor (1986), that this reverence for nature is crucial in our transformation from an anthropocentric, colonial mindset to ecocentric practices that can ensure the protection of the ecosystems essential to our existence.

To explore the application of these philosophies in music production, I reflect here on my connection and communion with nature during a two-week residency in rural Somerset called 'Awakenings At Wick'. My close friend, drummer and co-producer, Robert Swaine, joined me. Our relationship with the countryside is quite different. My semi-rural home means I hold knowledge of birds, trees and wildflowers feel comfortable in the wild. Rob, who is London based is more hesitant and less informed on ecology, yet he shares my desire to do good for humanity and the planet. Bringing a creative partner to the experience would build further awareness of my positionality and our unique responses to the location.

Our collective aim of the residency was to write initial tracks for a concept album that explores human relationships with birds as a metaphor for our spiritual connection to Mother Earth with

the hope that by recording, releasing and performing these tracks, audiences will be encouraged to elevate their kinships to their environment and serve as guardians for future generations.

In my dual identity as a practice-based researcher and as an artist, my academic aim was to explore the transformative potential of a two-week residence on creative practice, considering how the environment might impact the creative process, outputs, and participants.

"I live not in myself, but I become

Portion of that around me,"

Lord Byron (1812)



Image 3 – Rob in the grass meadow

Preparing for the Residency

Artist residencies are often used for diplomatic effects and cultural exchange because the artistic process involves mediation and problem-solving. I saw this residency as part of resolving the conflict we face with our egocentric attitudes to ecology and how these attitudes can limit our sustainability as a species.

Embarking on a residency is a way of compartmentalising the creative process and provides an immersive cultural experience and opportunity for reflection. As Rick Rubin advises, 'It is through communing with nature that we move closer to our own nature.' (2023). It is a way of retreating

away from the realities and habits of domestic life that can distract from creative purpose. When these distractions are avoided, the phenomenological recording is connected to the location of the work rather than external pressures or events, for a residency is unique in its ability to 'act as a microcosm with geographic and ethnographic specificity.' (Bevilacqua 2020). An artist residence can lead to deeper introspections and more experimental creative exploration, fostering holistic and intellectual growth. The two weeks would result in more experimentation and a deeper awareness of my creative abilities and connections to the natural environment.

Working within a landscape encourages the location to speak through the artist. As Adorno's *Mirrors and Mimesis* suggests (as cited in Goehr & Herwitz 2024), 'society or environment does not happen to individuals. It permeates them, shaping their impulses.' Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) describes this process as endowing a place with value. This relates to performative transformational learning theory, in which Barad (2007) says: "Individuals do not pre-exist their interaction; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating." To fully enable this process of landscape infiltration within the work, I thought it important to create opportunities for building a deep relationship with the place, allowing time for explorations and close interactions with the other creatures that call it home.

I considered Tomlinson's (2019: 21) exercises for integrating place and aimed to embed the following;

1. recording the environment for use in compositions
2. listening to the environment to prepare for compositions
3. site-specific environmental performances
4. constructing an environment in which listening will occur
5. harnessing the environment to make sound

I considered the ecological dimensions of the creative process by reflecting on the natural rhythms and environmental cues that would be present. By attuning to seasonality, such as the weather, sunrise/sunset, and moon stages, I hoped to cultivate a deeper connection to the natural world, fostering inspiration and creativity. The residential occurred close to the summer solstice, a sacred moment in the seasons, a time of hope and warmth when we come out of the darkness of winter with the whole promise of summer ahead. The environment is at its most creative, with new buds bringing fresh colour, peak birdsong with long days to explore. This timing of the residency would benefit the outcome, process and my mood.

Within any experiment, the same action should be repeated so that patterns can be discovered. As Rick Rubin (2023) highlights, "You can engage in the same awareness practice five days in a row

in the same location and have a unique experience each time." So, I developed a schedule that included time for exploration, reflection and production, and rest for "the creative process also involves gestation, allowing time for the seed of an idea to germinate, and time in which it is nurtured into articulation." (Nelson 2022 pg 44).

The process needed to be guided by the ethical and philosophical themes of the work. Inspired by Jamminaround, a residential course I had completed the previous summer that followed these philosophies, I scheduled morning yoga, a wholefood vegan diet, morning reflections, time for improvisation, opportunities to learn new things and time to explore the environment. I also wanted to use the opportunity of the residential to reset my habits. I deleted all social media apps and did not check emails or the news.

In the desire to stay motivated and focused as a duo, we created goals for the residency. Responding to Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) ideas on creating flow I created goals that were a balance of challenging and achievable.

Goals:

- Write tracks that will produce the sonic spectrum of an album
- Be inspired by and bring in the local environment to the recordings
- Experiment and be innovative with different recording and production techniques.
- Use daily rituals to create a productive, holistic and reflective experience.
- Include daily and weekly critical exegesis to measure the effectiveness of the process and outcomes and to determine how they might be best refined.

Methodologies for Creative Practice Research

Although I had ideas on goals and hypotheses on how the residency would impact my creative process, I did not have a specific research question. The Persian illuminationist theory supports the idea that creative practice leads to new knowledge (Najafi 2022). In the striving to make beautiful work, its subject will become more apparent, and questions can be raised and answered, for a symptom of sentience is a drive towards pleasure. This is in a sense post-humanist thinking, instead of imposing a question on the landscape and extracting an answer I was remaining open to the questions the landscape was asking of me. As Gillham and Mcgilp (2007) suggest, questions can "emerge as the issues become apparent in the process of recording". This approach to research is supported by the Kings College report on the impact of research on the creative industries, "It is that spirit of open inquiry that produces advances in the human spirit" Prof. John Holden cited in (Hewlett, Bond, Hinrichs-Krapel 2014)

I wanted to embody the musking practice and was guided by Kramer's (1990) notion that works of art are fields of humanly significant action. Producing music reveals our emotions, attitudes, and relationships. By analysing the outcomes and the process, we can reveal more about humanity and existence.

To allow the theories to speak through the outcomes, I grounded myself in research before the residency, as "theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time as practice is informed by theory." As Barabara Bold describes (cited in Nelson 2022), I had the methods, feelings, and conceptual knowledge. I was being, doing, and knowing.

I ensured there were multiple modes of reflection (appendix A), with chances to explore feelings of embodiment, to be entangled or immersed fully but also to disentangle my perceptions (Scott 2016) to understand the onto-epistemology of the experience and for questions to be captured. Reflection of practice was achieved by daily mindful journaling, as recommended by Donald Schön 's Reflective Model (1991), and later used for extrapolation (Gillham and Mcgilp 2007). This was completed individually first thing in the morning and then notes were taken during morning meetings with Rob before we started making music. For more nuanced reflections 'in action' (Schön 1991), I recorded a podcast-like discussion with Rob one week in and on the last day of the residency. As a multi-disciplinary practitioner, I documented the experience through various videos and photographs, celebrating that critical exegesis doesn't have to necessarily come from writing, for 'there are things that one can learn about a song instantly by dancing to it, which might take hours to articulate verbally.' (Joseph Schloss cited in Harrison 2011).

Making music has always been a valuable tool for connecting with the subconscious mind. Freud believed that the unconscious mind has suppressed desires and impulses that were not accessible through the conscious mind yet impact behaviour. To create authentic art, we need to be aware of and perhaps release these suppressed thoughts, or as Jung describes as instincts. Carl Jung suggested connecting to our subconscious using the archetypes symbolised within tarot cards (Hofer 2009). Instead of tarot, we used bird oracle cards to reflect and share our inner thoughts and feelings during our morning meetings.

Najafi (2022) highlights the importance of external input in illuminating the journey of creative exploration, challenging practitioners to confront their preconceptions and expand their horizons. In response and to be held instantly accountable, we planned a listening party to end the residential.



Image 4 – Hill of the trees

On Kinship

In this section, I will explore the conceptual knowledge I was consciously embedding into the creative process and subconsciously embodying within the music.

The work was created through the lens of James Lovelock's (1979) Gaia theory that the Earth is conscious and self-preserving and that evolution is through collaboration. We have much in common, culturally and biologically, with our sentient cousins with roots that go back millions of years. As Haraway (2016) states, "No, species, not even our arrogant one pretending to be good individuals in so-called modern Western scripts, acts alone; assemblages of organic species and of abiotic actors make history, the evolutionary kind and the other kinds too." Marchesini (2022) continues, 'Culture is not an emanation of the human, but the fruit of the epiphanic encounter with the non-human'. Marchesini's work on animal ontology explores these commonalities, demonstrating how creativity is not limited to the human species. The animal condition means adapting to the given environment to, 'fulfil their specific animal condition.' We can connect to the animality of ourselves by understanding our motivations, unique qualities and commonality with other species.

We must uncenter our minds.

We must unhumanise our views for a little and be as confident

As the rock and the ocean that we are made from.

(Robinson Jeffers cited in Hinton, D., 2022)

By writing non-human and post-human stories, we can reverse the objectification of nature and 'slow violence' (Nixon 2011) of the Anthropocene that is causing the existential permacrisis we

collectively face. "In order to think about a sustainable future, we need to be able to pause, think, and imagine." (Wals, Weakland, Corcoran 2017). Then, we can head imaginatively towards an eco-scene where all creatures are valued equally. Art is an important element of this response for, 'It inspires caring and respect for the world in which we live, stimulates dialogue, sparks imagination and contributes to the socio-cultural transformations whereby the diversity of life forms found on earth may flourish.' (Wallen 2012). Amitav Ghosh, interviewed for the Emergence Magazine Podcast (2022), explains how 'the planet will never come alive for you unless your songs and stories give life to all the beings seen and unseen that inhabit living Earth.'

Bird populations have significantly decreased worldwide, especially in the UK (Horton 2024). Government and industry leaders are still operating in a mode that others nature. There is a desperate need to ground policies and processes that speak to Indigenous philosophies of connectedness with the Earth. The arts have a significant role in changing these attitudes, especially sound, because it travels through and around barriers, finding us and calling us out of inattention." (Haskell 2019). "Vibration connects us with all beings and connects us to all things interdependently." (Oliveros 2010). Engagement with music through listening, performing or responding through dance can be a spiritual experience. Music in all its forms is "the vehicle which carries emotion from one to another, and it is our ability to move sympathetically with one another" (cited in Butterson 2008, pg 57). It is through music that we can collectively better ourselves.

We move the same way and let the music change us.

(Ezra Collective ft Jazmin Lacey 2024)

Integrating bird sounds and themes into electronic music production is a way of weaving bird life into our human lives. It opens conversations about our relationships with ecology and encourages others to listen and learn the sounds of the birds and their meaning. As Haskell (2019) implores, "by learning the sounds and recognising bird songs, we can connect to the Earth as our ancestors did, and we can pass on this knowledge and passion". Through education, commonalities can be discovered, and differences can be fully appreciated. I, therefore, dived into the world of ornithology, explored how birds have influenced culture across disciplines, and translated this into music through lyrics, sonic landscapes and structure.

"The universal rights of nature cannot effectively be declared in a systematic treatise; they can only be expressed by means of celebratory narrative. They require a romantic riot of sketches, fragments and tales—narratives of community, reminiscences of walking and working, vignettes of birds and their nests, animations of children and insects and grass."

(Bate 2000)



Image 5 – Frankie in the long grass

Ecocentric philosophies connect with radical relational ontology and indigenous ways of knowing that everything is connected and constantly changing. It is the shift back to understanding that existence is not an individual affair and that through listening to our environment, we can understand the current reality, for what happens to the land happens to people (Lange 2016). To listen and connect to our environment, we need to take time out of our anthropocentric busyness. Listening aligns with creativity; as Cohen (2019) describes, “Creativity depends on maintaining contact with the “still, silent spot””. Hinton (2022) supports this idea by suggesting that subconsciousness is wild and always working in the background, and things will emerge from emptiness. Hinton explains this with links to Wu-Wei, the art of not trying, which states that great things come from the softness of not pushing past limits and staying in the zone.

In turn, the artist, through their process and outcomes, encourages concentration in others. This focus or mindfulness is crucial for the appreciation of our environment. Hughes' (1991) analogy of the battery hen crammed with stimuli has only intensified due to the proliferation of the internet and social media, which increased urban living, leading to the extinction of experience and disconnection with the wild. Biophilia can be rekindled through close interactions by noticing and naming. Benjamin (2018) reminds us that “cultivating kinship is cultivating life”.

Lineage of influences

Various cultural influences informed the electronic music production during the residency. As Nelson (2022) suggests a 'practice review' to 'locate praxis in a lineage,' I provide examples of artists working with similar themes. These connect to the contemporary environmental movement that sees artists across mediums responding to the climate crisis and mass extinction, akin to a revival

of romanticism (Hall 2016). Examples include Cosmo Sheldrake's adaptation of Britten's Cuckoo for his album *Wake Up Call* (2020) and Hannah Peel's *Emergence in Nature* (2021). Other electronic artists include Billie Eilish, Jon Hopkins, James Blake, and Hannah Rikini. As an example of work produced from a residency, I listened to Hidden Orchestra's Marconi & *The Lizard* EP, which was recorded during a 2015 sound residency in Cornwall and commissioned by the National Trust for their Sounds of our Shores project. More extensive collaborations include The Birdsong Project, the UN initiative Sounds Right, and A Guide to the Birdsong of South America (2015) by Rhythm and Roots. Marcus Coates's Dawn Chorus (Fabrica 2015) is also noteworthy.

The Work

This section gives some context to the three tracks finished during the residency. They can be heard here: <https://on.soundcloud.com/FXmphAVKok9BNo1D6>.

On the first day of the residency, we discussed the need for new narratives for climate renewal. We explored the question: What stories should be told through song to address the collective challenge of the permacrisis? We decided to tell the story in three parts: destruction, reflection, and restoration, as we believe healing occurs in these stages.

Act 1 Destruction: Ecocide is Genocide

My residency diary outlines some of my frustrations at the start of the residency. Rob struggled to settle into his creative space, and I had felt crowded by this as his anxiety crept into my makeshift studio. During our first walk, we discovered a dead baby bird on the fence post. Long grasses had triggered severe hay fever, and we had to backtrack after finding a footpath was closed. This initial conflict between us and the landscape can be heard in the rawness of the production and within the lyrics.

The lyrics respond to research into the great sparrow hunt in 1958 China (Moss 2023) which caused the most significant mass human starvation event in history. Ecocide had led to genocide. I explored different perspectives of the experience, the sparrow reflecting the migrant and the human who realises the horror of what they have done. I was very much motivated to write about the terror being inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza, who, like the Sparrows, are never allowed to settle and were facing starvation and destruction of their land, as recently visualised by Forensic Architecture (2024)

The lyrics:

From pillar to post
Molehill to mountain

Reaching the shore
To find nowhere's open

Never to be settled
up in the air
hearts will tire
Fall from fair

Counted in a row
Placed on the table
Feathers in the sink
Feeling sick

I need to rest
I need to nest
I need to feed
To sow the seed

Genocide is Ecocide and
Ecocide is Genocide

Act 2 Reflection: Mynah

By Thursday, Rob had settled into his space, and I was managing my acute hay fever. We were getting into a flow. During our morning meeting, I picked the Parrot Oracle card.

The parrot provides you with the skill to get in touch with your environment,
to learn from it through imitation, and to thereby understand and exchange
with other life forms.

(Ruland 2023)

My morning reflections and meetings with Rob were held outside, where a beautiful wooden windchime hung. It had been rather windy over the last few days, so I was familiar with its sounds. I recorded it using the stereo mic, and its tempo and key influenced the beginning of the second track on reflection. The noise on the track is the wind.



Image 6 – Frankie under the wind chime

The lyrics reference Huxley's *Island* (1962), his final novel and exploration of a utopian society centred on Eastern philosophies. The book explores the protagonist's journey of shifting away from Protestantism and falling in love with Pala's society with the help of the Mynah birds, which remind the people of their calls to bring their attention back to the here and now and to be compassionate. This mindful ontology demonstrated in literature exemplifies what David Hinton (2022) would call wild mind.

The lyrics were also inspired by a forest bathing and sound healing workshop we had taken part in on the site. Lyrics:

Cold water over my head
Realign
Old ways shipwrecked
I admit I was wrong
On this island of being
I will learn
Attention to the here and now.

No better teacher than nature
Keep me open to her
Show me truth in sunlight
In her flower
Attention to the here and now

Act 3 Restoration: Blackbird & Canary

The final track was to be one of restoration, so I set about writing lyrics that celebrate the start of the summer. I explored appropriate chord sequences, hooks and lyrics. I wrote a story of a bird who, having been freed from its cage, sets about reseeded lost forests and bringing people hope, inspired by a couple of cranes that we spotted circling above the landscape. The production of this track was a struggle, and by mid-week, we both decided to give up on it and allow space for other productions following the idea of Wu-Wei – trust, not try.

We woke at 4:30 am to record the dawn chorus with the stereo microphone and encountered a baby woodpecker who flew down and stared at us from a branch above as we stared right back. It was a magical experience of kinship that reminded me of our precious existence (Benjamin 2018) and our animality. This moment of reverence was something we wanted to translate into the work. The blackbird and the canary were oracle cards I had recently pulled, and both spoke about raising the voice of joy. I begun mimicking bird voices with synth hooks over chord progressions suited for celebrations. We settled on an instrumental piece that brought into multiple elements that bounce off each other, much like a dawn chorus, conjuring the sense of celebration better than lyrics could.

Significance of the outcomes

The 3 tracks provide a three-part narrative for climate renewal – acceptance, reflection and celebration and demonstrate approaches to creating commercial electronic music that collaborates with landscape.

Ecocide is Genocide has the least integration of sounds from the landscape and represents the current conflict caused by egocentric mindsets in both the lyrics and the musicology. The arpeggiator serves as an alarm and creates a sense of taking flight, especially at the end when drench in reverb. The guitars, dark timbre of the bassline and gritty post-punk production represent the friction caused when we are unable to fully embody our environment and work in harmony with our ecology.

The trip-hop aesthetic in *Mynah* demonstrates the softness that comes when we reach out to our environment for answers and collaborate with it in our creative practice. The track starts with the sounds of flies, signifying the aftermath. A kalimba, an ancient Africa instrument, brings the first melody and hints at non-western thinking. The lyrics respond directly to Haskell (2019) demand for attention and the use of the wind chimes reminds us that "Vibration connects us with all beings and connects us to all things interdependently." (Oliveros 2010).

Finally *Blackbird and Canary* symbolizes the experimental creative spirit that can come when we are settled and fully embrace the rhythms of life within our ecosystem. It demonstrated the tight collaboration and intra-action between Rob, myself and our surroundings. The mix of sampled

bird and insect sounds with synths that mimic sounds of the landscape with the drums breaks that emerged from city cultures speaks to Donna Harraway's (2016) thoughts on assemblage and Marchisini's (2022) culture. The track pushes the boundaries of electronica into future ecologically focused electronic genres.

Lessons on Creative Ecology

This paper set out to explore the impact of the landscape on music production. By completing a two-week residency at Wick Farm, I have more clarity in how to integrate nature and support myself through the creative process, in turn enabling me to encourage others to make kin and create in collaboration with the environment. The inter-action (Barad) between place, process, and outcomes has become more apparent and I have clearer questions to answer with further creative practice research.

Creative practice is a personal affair, and the individuality of creative practice means each practitioner needs to explore and work within the confines of their own nature and working environments. Using this as an example I hope to encourage others to experiment by collaborating with their ecology and explore how that can transform both artist and their audience towards an ecological sensibility.

Here, I will outline the insights that emerged from the daily reflections, meetings and weekly recorded discussions that can be applied to future research and wider creative practice.

1. Atune to the natural rhythms and be flexible with your goals

June feels very productive, and our business was mirrored by the business of the nature around us with the majority of flowers coming into bloom bringing bees and breeding birds. We found our days ending at the same time as the blackbird stopped singing. This served as a reminder that creativity is not limited to the human species and teleomphia is present in all creatures, and we have our own seasonality.

The pressure to produce can be seen as a projection of the colonial and capitalist mindset where the process is undervalued and individual needs overlooked. This pressure can lead to anxiety, which crushes creativity. This mental strain is called psychic entropy – the mind disrupting the flow. Daily meetings and evaluations helped to reorder goals and align them with our own rhythms. Being fully present in the landscape; the weather, bird song, beauty of the environment, and removing the distractions encouraged us to sit within our own animality allowing our Teleophoria (Marchisini) to become clear. This aided the creative flow and enjoyment of the experience. As Csikszentmihalyi (Pg 6, 1992) advises, "the optimal state of inner experience is one in which there is order in the consciousness." There will be times when we are naturally less productive or

motivated, and knowing your needs and responding to your energy levels is as important to ecocentric sensibility as having goals and environmentally conscious outputs.

2. Find your flow

A positive emotional state is essential to getting into a creative flow. It took Rob a few days to feel comfortable in the space and set up his studio. We talked about the need to settle into a place, and we discussed ways of doing this, such as exercises in making sounds in the space, much like a bird calls in the morning to say, 'I am here, this is my place' (Akerman 2017), and constructive self-talk. As Csikszentmihalyi (1992) says, "People who learn to control their inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives." In addition to yoga and meditation, eating and exercising well and the removal of social media, the mood was also controlled by the peaceful environment and the ability to take time out. This led back to Wu Wei; that if you give space for the idea, it will come. We learnt that when one idea isn't working be ready to move on. Like the clouds that were moving fast across the vast skies outside our studios, we learnt to trust rather than try, and let critical thoughts drift by. We regarded our consciousness as wild yet tamable, allowing the work to be authentic and intuitive. We would sit down without knowing what would come but allow the notes to come through play, opening the door to the subconscious, confirming Hinton's notion of the wild mind (2022).

One significant benefit of the residency was the reduction of distractions. In the weekly recorded discussions, we both compared the residency to a holiday: a break from the norm, the opportunity to be inspired by new surroundings, time and space to reflect and try new things and a relief from the noise of everyday life. It was clear that reducing the noise of everyday life enhances creativity as supported by Cohen (2019). Through walking, swimming, resting in the natural environment and waking up to bird song, ideas and thoughts become more precise and confident.



Image 7 – Rob in his makeshift studio

3. Reflect on action

The Bird Oracle Cards used as a tool for reflections on self and the interpersonal relationship and intra-actions between Rob and I were more helpful than first thought. They gave us ideas for personal growth and processes. They provided a way of opening up about issues we had had the previous day and our current state of mind so we could be more empathetic to each other's needs and help each other problem-solve. They also became a source of creative idea generation; some cards gave explicit directions such as 'listen to your environment' and themes for songs such as 'joyfulness'. They were always very positive and lighthearted, which boosted morale. It highlighted the importance of the symbolism of wildlife as a valuable lens for self-reflection.

Impact

REF states that quality research is "A process of investigation, leading to new insights, that are effectively shared." (cited in Gauntlett 2025) and a report from King's College London (Hewlett, Bond, Hinrichs-Krapel 2014) on the Creative Role of Research provides a taxonomy for eight areas of impact, including influencing industry practice, transforming public understanding, developing audiences, informing curricula and pedagogy, promoting social change, developing policy, growing the economy, and improving health and wellbeing."

This heuristic approach of daily exercises, reflective practices and lessons on creative ecology can be used as a transferable research model for further research on the development of egocentric creative processes.

To contribute to the transformation of public understanding I intend to share this work to encourage others to build on their kinship with their environment through creative practice. I have videos, photographs, sound recordings, interviews, and tracks that can be transformed into different media to reach a broad audience. I can, for example, create a podcast, a social media campaign, video essays, and this academic paper that can be presented or performed at conferences. The tracks created on this residency are the start of the production of an entire album that will be released, performed with visuals, and toured with the associated press, music videos, documentaries and merchandise, which can further highlight the philosophies and findings explored within the practice.

Allowing space for creativity and connection to the environment is underdeveloped in education, especially with the current focus on STEM subjects (BSA 2022). Building a creative ecology and exploring a holistic and ecocentric approaches to education would give space for all industries to be more mindful of their impact. As an academic and teacher, I will integrate more awareness of this creative process into pedagogy. I have already directed workshops that combine experiences in local nature reserves with music production. I encouraged participants to collaborate with their

surroundings, sampling sounds and connecting to the environment and each other through deep listening. I intend to run further events, possibly guided residencies or short courses, that encourage participants to respond to their environment through embodiment rather than extraction. In the university classroom I now encourage my students to examine their own telephoria and relationships to their environment and each other. I enable students to reflect on their conditions of flow state and how that might relate to external rhythms. This builds community, wellbeing and furthers ecological sensibilities. The use of the Oracle cards helps elicit ideation and reflections in the classroom too.

I had the privilege of having the time and resources to afford this 2-week stay in Somerset. The benefits included improved health and wellbeing, sense of community, and more focused creative practice. There are many residential opportunities, but they are often expensive or highly competitive. This research contributes to the debate that artists of all backgrounds need support to ensure they have the time and space to create. Not only will this enhance the individual and environment, but the outcomes can also enhance the economy and the happiness rating of a nation. Many incredible artists before austerity could thrive when their basic needs were met. This is no longer the case as arts funding is cut and the cost of living rises, meaning studio and residency fees are out of budget for many.

Conclusion

There is a limit to what can be achieved in two weeks, but a residency is a great way to start the embodiment of new processes. By taking time away from my usual home I was able to witness the impact of the landscape on my creative practice and I can now build stronger relationships within my everyday habitat. I better understand how to encourage others to make kin through creative practice and the joy of doing so.

This reflection serves as one personal story of renewing creative practice inline with ecological philosophies. Yet, common philosophies, psychology and sociology can be better understood by exploring the individual. (Gauntlett 2025). I hope to inspire other artists to become entangled with their landscape to further creative practice research on the ontology of the artist and as Haraway demands “fabulate, in order not to despair.” (2016)

The permacrisis calls for creativity and imagination; therefore, artists have a clear role in problem-solving, providing alternative narratives, encouraging others to build their own creative ecology, and making space for connection and kinship with their natural environments. We must disrupt our egocentric lives to rewrite the stories we tell that represent our relationships to the natural world to bring more opportunities for communal reverence of wildness.

The outputs demonstrate that advances in electronic music do not have to be technologically driven but can progress in harmony with nature and through musicking we can reconnect to ecocentric sensibilities and bring audiences on this journey.

Life is a search for freedom, which is achieved not through autonomy but by increasing the relationship with the outside world.

(Marchesini 2022)

I did not have a clear research question at the start of this project but through doing I now question; How can we embody our environment in our creative practice and how might this lead to an eco-centric culture?

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Appendices

A. Modes of reflection:

- Individual mindful journal writing exploring all the senses and mood
- Morning Meetings – using oracle cards to allow the tacit to become more explicit.
- Daily portraits – Visual feelings and evidence of relationship to the space.
- Documentary Videos -reflection in action
- Weekly interviews
- Listening party to end the residential
- Analysis of outputs

B. The Schedule:

7:30am Rise and write reflectively in personal journal

8:30 Yoga and breakfast

9:30 Meeting with Rob – reflections on the day before, pulling a bird oracle card as reflection aid.
Share notes, set tasks.

10-12:30pm morning session

12:30pm – 1:30pm Lunch

1:30-3:30 pm Afternoon session

Afternoon rest/adventure

8pm dinner

9-11pm evening session

Approx 6.5 hours of music production a day

Weekends used for rest and wider exploration of the location.

C. Kit list:

Video camera and tripod

Home studio set up

On location sound recording kit

Still camera

Sketch book, notebooks

Reference books, manuals, theories

Reflection aids: Bird oracle cards.