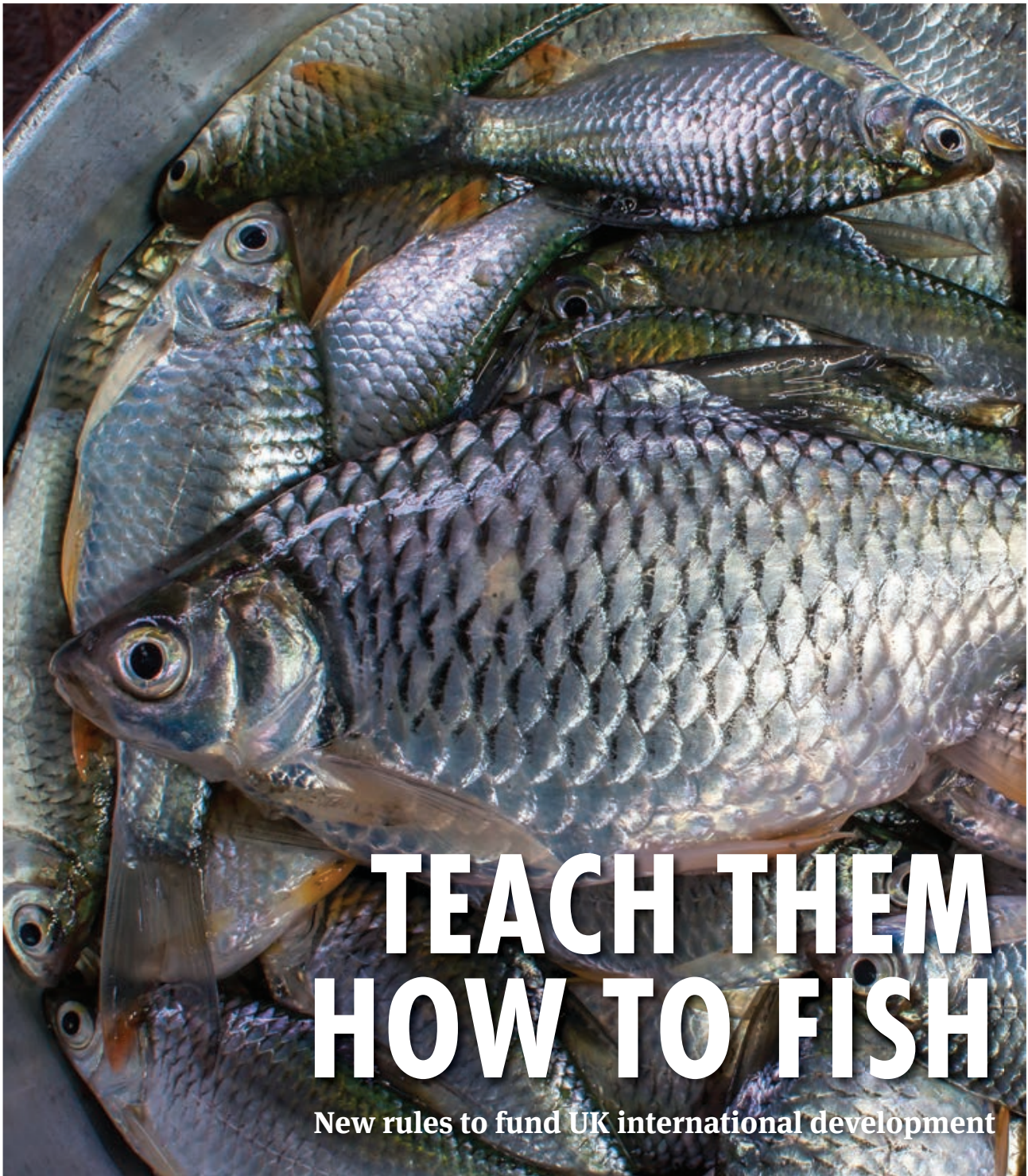


# The Environment

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

**CIWEM**



## TEACH THEM HOW TO FISH

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# BRIDGING THE GAP



Clive Adams: bridging the gap between science and the arts

Increasing collaboration between the arts and environmental science can benefit both, argues **Clive Adams**

**T**he Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW) is an educational charity that works with the arts to give people a deeper understanding of their

responsibilities within and towards nature.

Over the next three years, CCANW will work with art.earth at Dartington Hall in Devon on several international and transdisciplinary partnerships that focus on water issues.

One of CCANW's partnerships aims to encourage a role for artists within the new Global Network of Water Museums, planning residencies and a major exhibition, Spirito d'Acqua, in Venice to coincide with the city's world-famous Biennale.

Spirito d'Acqua will involve several important international artists whose work addresses climate change, pollution and excessive water abstraction. Venice, the so-called city of water, faces an increasingly complex battle with rising seas and waterfront erosion by massive cruise ships.

Working with Civiltà dell'Acqua in Italy, CCANW will organise residencies that encourage collaboration between artists and environmental scientists and explore the city's hydraulic artefacts and waterscapes. They will also explore

connections with islands, such as the Maldives and Tuvalu, that are seriously affected by rising sea levels. Cost is the only obstacle, and the partners are working to secure major sponsorship.

Another collaborative research project that will engage CCANW in the coming years is Science Walden, named after the books *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854) by Henry D Thoreau and *Walden Two* (1948) by BF Skinner.

**“Although we have a subjective appreciation of beauty, and an objective understanding of the science behind environmental challenges, we struggle to understand our biological natures – and that seriously affects the important choices we make”**

CCANW's Science Walden partner is Ulsan National Institute for Science and Technology (UNIST) in South Korea, with funding from the Korean Ministry of Science. The institute has designed a waterless toilet that can convert

waste into energy or as a soil improver. The latest phase of project will build a community Living Lab, with spaces for living, working and public engagement, especially with young people.

CCANW will organise residencies, exhibitions and symposia to bring together artists and scientists at Dartington and UNIST and, potentially, in Venice, and write papers for international academic journals.

## DIALOGUE

At the heart of these collaborations is CCANW's plan to bring the arts and sciences into closer dialogue, to examine what each can learn from the other, develop projects and outcomes that bridge the divide and move society to a more sustainable future.

This ambition is not without precedent. In 1959 CP Snow drew attention to the gap between the sciences and humanities in his book, *The Two Cultures*. This cultural divide, Snow claimed, was a major hindrance to solving many of the world's problems. Since then, several other thinkers, notably the biologist EO Wilson, have attempted to heal the rift: it no longer seems out of place for an artist to be concerned with scientific enquiry.

As the problems facing humanity mount, artists are beginning to see that a healed culture can promote and bring about a healed planet. CIWEM aims to contribute to this important work. Its Art and Environment Network works with CCANW to judge and present the annual Nick Reeves Award to encourage and reward outstanding contributions in environmental arts.

In 2018, reflecting our increasingly global reach, we will invite nominations of artists and projects from around the world, not just from the UK. Over the next two years, we suggest that engaging with water issues is the focus and hope to raise funds through sponsorship and grants to make a financial award for the first time.

Of course, there are many ways to look at what we mean by nature. Beyond its



South Korea's professor Jaewoon Cho works on the Science Walden project

everyday meaning, which includes the aesthetic experience, lies its scientific meaning and an understanding of biological activity. Beyond that lies a metaphysical or social concept through which humanity imagines difference.

Although we have a subjective appreciation of beauty, and an objective understanding of the science behind environmental challenges, we struggle to understand our biological natures – and that seriously affects the important choices we make. This failure seems to be at the heart of today's ecological crisis, and science now questions the wisdom of establishing models of human behaviour on an incomplete understanding of nature.

Organisms are as co-operative as they are competitive, and as creative as they are destructive, but we need to rethink our biological natures to reach a more harmonious relationship with each other, with other species and with the rest of nature. The biologist EO Wilson puts it this way: "We have created a Star Wars civilisation, with Stone Age emotions."

#### RESPONSES

Whenever civilisations come under stress from environmental and social change, new forms of expression tend to evolve.

In the Sixties, when the world first became more aware of the fragility of our planet, the Land Art movement emerged. In the years leading up to the Millennium when we were increasingly concerned about climate change, new genetic technologies and species depletion, this developed into eco art, bio art and sci-art.

Today, there is huge public interest in environmental issues and a growing

number of artists are engaged in transdisciplinary work. In our recent Soil Culture project, CCANW received 655 applications from artists in 39 countries to undertake residencies in nine science-based organisations, including the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew and the universities of Plymouth and Exeter.

Applications for our forthcoming project on the River Dart, The Ephemeral River, came from 34 countries.

CCANW must urgently encourage a new generation of artists and curators to develop this engagement with ecological issues. Having formed a team of expert associate artists, curators and researchers, we also need greater post-graduate opportunities in arts and ecology, and in the environmental humanities.

Waste comes in many forms and neglecting opportunities for co-operation over competition seriously affects what can be achieved. Funding for the arts in England tends to keep like-minded organisations in competitive isolation. Now is the time for us to overcome the competitive incentive and unite into a lobbying voice.

Engaging people with the arts is vital, as they are expressions of individual vision and a means of raising eco-consciousness. Using the arts in this way can kindle the imagination, open minds to new creative possibilities, encourage grassroots activism to complement conventional education and science, and help to heal the rift between the two cultures. ◦

**Clive Adams is founding director of the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World: [www.ccanw.org.uk](http://www.ccanw.org.uk)**

## Water and the Arts: framing the discussion

Founded in 2001, the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW) is part of a family of art and ecology organisations that includes art.earth at Dartington Hall in Devon.

The centre made the UK's most substantial contribution through its Soil Culture programme to the UN International Year of Soils in 2015. Last year, CCANW took part in an international conference in Venice which discussed setting up a Global Network of Water Museums.

This month, Clive Adams travels to the Netherlands to a second conference to discuss the new network, which is supported by UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme. Delegates will discuss how artists can address water awareness, including rising sea levels, ocean pollution, excessive water abstraction, lack of safe drinking water, and water as a subject of contemplation.

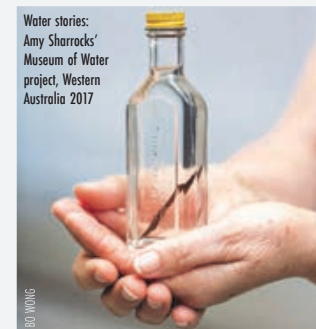
Leading artists and curators will address more than 70 delegates from around the world, to encourage water museums to work collaboratively with artists. The speakers include artists Amy Sharrocks from the UK, Basia Irland from New Mexico, and American curator Sue Spaid.

Ms Sharrocks' travelling *Museum of Water* collects publicly donated water, accompanied by stories. Her exhibits include water from a holy river in India, condensation from the window of a student's damp flat and water from the last Ice Age.

Irland's exhibition *Reading the River* has been staged at Museum De Domijnen in Sittard in the Netherlands, one of the few venues whose principal focus is on art and ecology, which recently hosted *Ecovention Europe*, an exhibition curated by Ms Spaid.

Belgian curator Christophe De Jaeger of *Gluon* will present his recent project *WATER.WAR*, which brought together artists, social designers, technologists, scientists and entrepreneurs to identify today's challenges and to find ways to live more sustainably with this precious resource.

New York-based Nancy Nowacek will talk about the artist group *Works on Water*, which works with scientists in response to public awareness of ecological issues. The group includes Eve Mosher, *overleaf*, whose *HighWater Line* project has highlighted the effect of rising seas in low-lying areas of New York, Bristol and other cities.



Water stories: Amy Sharrocks' Museum of Water project, Western Australia 2017

# I WALK THE LINE

"Over half the world's people live in regions vulnerable to sea-level rise, for example, large coastal cities such as New York, Boston, Miami and Los Angeles"



JAMIE GERSHEN

Cities from Bristol to Miami, pictured, have staged High WaterLine events

A New York artist is helping international campaigners to highlight the threat of rising seas. By **Karen Thomas**

**W**hen New York-based Eve Mosher developed her public artwork High WaterLine she wanted to raise awareness of the threat to the city from rising sea levels.

To help New Yorkers to visualise the impact of climate change, Ms Mosher devised a simple idea. She rented a sportsfield marker and persuaded local people to help her to draw a line in chalk, ten feet above sea level, to show which neighbourhoods around the city are threatened by rising seas.

Now, Ms Mosher is developing a creative commons package to encourage artists around the world to stage their own HighWaterLine events, creating guidelines to engage with the local community and authorities.

Rising seas remains a hot topic. Scientists predict that levels will rise

between two and 15ft by the end of the century, threatening island nations and low-lying countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh. "Over half the world's people live in regions vulnerable to sea-

level rise, for example, large coastal cities such as New York, Boston, Miami and Los Angeles," Ms Mosher says.

HighWaterLine first took to the streets ten years ago. Ms Mosher and her small army of helpers used chalk and beacons to mark out a 70-mile battle line for future flooding across Brooklyn and Manhattan.

The project has gripped the public imagination. Communities in Philadelphia, in Delroy Beach and Miami in Florida and in the UK, in Bristol, have already staged their own HighWaterLine events, a springboard to discuss the impact of climate change.

The guidelines suggest ways to engage local people in the project and to win approval from the local authorities. So far, requests have come in from as far afield as Dublin and The Hague, and Ms Mosher hopes one day to stage the event in Washington DC.

Meanwhile, Ms Mosher has developed new artworks. She has teamed up with fellow artists Emily Blumenfeld, Sarah

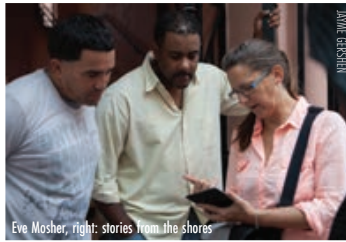
## WORKS ON WATER 2017 IN FIGURES

- 1,350** GALLERY VISITORS
- 3,100** PEOPLE AT OUTDOOR EVENTS
- 10** NEW ARTWORKS
- 11** SITE-SPECIFIC WORKS
- 26** ARTISTS
- 10** CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WATER
- 250** CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS

**"Mosher plans to walk and document the shore line, recording the stories of its communities, many of them immigrants"**

Cameron Sunde, Clarinda Mac Low, Nancy Nowacek and Katie Pearl to form the New York art collective, Works on Water.

All are artists who work on, in and with the water to present public art and performance work around themes of climate change, urban density and ecological issues. "Water is constantly moving and our work responds to that,"



Eve Mosher, right: stories from the shores

Ms Mosher tells *The Environment*. The group held its first triennial at 3LD Art & Technology in Lower Manhattan, in June last year, presenting installations, theatre and workshops around themes of water in the built environment. It is now planning Works on Water 2020, timed to

coincide with New York's city-planning department presenting its Vision 2020 plan for water. The plans include a residency programme on Governors Island in New York, and a mentoring scheme to support it.

Ms Mosher's next artwork, *Liquid City*, will take her the length of New York's 520-mile coast. She plans to walk and document the shore line, recording the stories of its communities, many of them immigrants.

She is also working with Sarah Cameron Sunde to build up a database of artists working on water-related themes around the world. ●

## CINDERELLA RIVER: THE EVOLVING NARRATIVE OF THE RIVER LEE

**FIFTY ARTISTS**, water experts, academics and locals gathered in the tiled Turbine Room inside the restored marine engine house at Walthamstow Wetlands in North London to launch *Cinderella River*, a book commissioned by the Hydrocitizenship Project.

Author Simon Read is a Suffolk-based artist and associate professor of fine art at Middlesex University in London. The book traces his journey as he walks and maps stretches of the 52-mile River Lea – also known as the River Lee – from its source near Luton to the Thames.

The book documents the environmental successes and challenges of London's little-known second river. It supports the three and a half year, £1.5 million Hydrocitizenship Project, which drew from four case studies set up to interrogate the shifting relationships between communities, their water

**"Cinderella River considers the future of the Lea, marking a frontline in the battle to regenerate – some would argue socially cleanse – some of the more deprived postcodes of North and East London"**

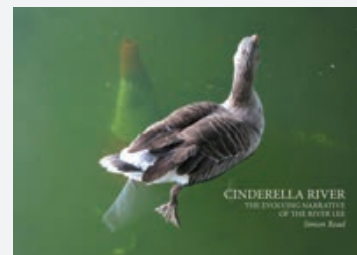
bodies and wider ecological issues.

Under the 2000 Water Framework Directive, the waters of the River Lea fall under the River Lea Catchment Partnership, which aims to promote biodiversity across the catchment – although many of its tributaries cross private land. The Lee Valley Regional Park that contains it is home to eight sites of special scientific interest.

Prof Read describes the Lea as "a particularly utilitarian water course", supporting multiple roles as navigable waterway, source of fresh water, wildlife habitat and drain. *Cinderella River* considers the River Lea in terms of its biodiversity, access, management, recreational uses, supply, drainage and flood control.

It also considers the future of the river, marking a frontline in the battle to regenerate – some would argue socially cleanse – some of the more deprived postcodes of North and East London. Land ownership is particularly contentious. One recent dispute has pitted developers against the Save Lea Marshes campaign group over plans to sell five acres of Leyton Marshes for housing and a new ice rink.

"Although historically it has been a Cinderella of a river, created by and enabling the working industrial



*Cinderella River: the Lea is 'a particularly utilitarian water course'*

landscapes of East London and beyond, now it is undergoing comprehensive transformation into a wetland landscape of such a high level of biodiversity that it has become a model for other metropolitan environments in the UK and Western Europe," Prof Read reports.

"Perhaps this is because it has always been such a busy, marshy and inhospitable place that, since 1965, its post-industrial landscape has, by increments, been reborn as a luminous green thread that now runs through densely built Stratford, Hackney, Tottenham, Walthamstow and Edmonton, out into the open water lands of the Lee Valley Regional Park."

Completed in October last year, the Hydrocitizenship project deployed water experts, conservationists, artists and community groups to look at four areas; the neglected waterways northeast London, the hidden waters of Bristol, the erosion-threatened coast at Borth Tal-y-bont in west Wales and the Leeds-Liverpool canal around Shipley in West Yorkshire. ●