

## **Creativity and the artist**

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# *Creativity and the Artist*

HESTER REEVE, JESSICA BALL, ALISON CHURCHILL  
and EMMA COCKER

The first part of this feature is a shortened and re-worked version of a talk given by **Hester Reeve** in August 2021 as part of Pari Center's 2021 Beyond Bohm series, 'Contemplation and Creativity—Creativity and the Artist.'

Following this is the transcript of a speculative panel conversation with her three invited panel guests **Jessica Ball, Emma Cocker and Alison Churchill** which was conducted in the spirit of Bohm Dialogue.

## *Hester Reeve's Introduction*

*The essence of human life is art—a whole movement in which end and means are the action of fitting—it is clearly of key importance to give attention to the fitting or non-fitting of our overall world views in the broader reality in which we live.*

David Bohm, *On Creativity*

*Art is not viewed straight forwardly as a tool of communication, more as a complex kingdom that is continually attempting to establish itself through human thought and action. My curiosity here is how such thinking-creating sculpts new types of subjectivities and an openness to becoming that is not purely cultural.*

Hester Reeve, artist statement

**T**he ideas of David Bohm have been really significant in helping me clarify some of my own more inchoately sensed concerns as an artist with my culture's tendency to assume artistic activity and value rest solely in objects authored by humans—art works. It's not that I don't make art works myself and more that the force field of thinking around art as a human endeavour and our human beingness within-the-universe has always been as more significant to me, the underlaying-over-arching Art, so to speak. But how to even find words to communicate this, especially if one wants to avoid dogmatic universalisation or authoritative mandates for what is or isn't artistic action? Yet without *re-cognising* this aspect, feeding into it as it were with our creative capacities, Art's potentialising forcefield stays anthropocentric and thus limited as do, on a more local

scale, the art works we produce, albeit in ever articulate and experimental ways.

Refreshingly, David Bohm's writing on creativity and, linked to this, what he named 'artamovement,' was not directed exclusively at art works, instead it sought to outline a more foundational capacity in any one of us—or in any human discipline—for new orders of perception and understanding.

Such new orders cannot be determinedly opened up via human skills *ex nihilo*, rather such orders correspond to, or 'fit' with to use Bohm's term, non-human levels of 'actuality' that we can only intuit towards via opening our body-mind-gut through some sort of participatory sensing-doing-conceiving within our situation and wider levels of reality.

To fully understand this, one needs to remember that all of Bohm's ideas link to his notion of 'undivided wholeness.' This he sees as the underlying infinite reality of which each one of us—and each of everything else in existence—is an active participant, all unfolding in different aspects of that wholeness: Different but not separate. However, because our metaphysical paradigm in the West is predicated on a mechanistic world view, we have become fragmented and encapsulated in the logic of our language and resulting system of thoughts. Similarly pernicious is that this paradigm has over a few centuries instituted a belief that its analysis of reality, God, truth, life etc. is *the* correct one, as if it is not a model but an accurate correspondence with 'all that is' and one provable by empirical measurement, etc. The results of this are for Bohm not only that, 'the creative possibilities of the mind are generally dormant,' but, even more problematically, 'it is very hard to even perceive that one is not creative.' [*On Creativity*; p.137]

Bohm is the first to admit that it would be impossible to operate in the world without a metaphysical model of reality; his point is to develop new one/s based on creative

participation with/within the universe and one/s that are dynamic, collaborations with the non-human rather than impositions of rigidly fixed presuppositions. Bohm's own suggestion for this predicament was *movement* as a 'germ of a different world view' and, importantly, open movement without an end goal and without an entity or force doing the moving (as in a god). In his explanatory outline of artamovement, he first turns to the word 'art' itself to reveal that originally it had not designated a specific area of human activity and creative material production but instead the action of some thing or some thought 'fitting' as in attunement or the sense of unexplainable beauty. But again, to be fully appreciated, this new model needs to be understood in relationship to the notion of 'undivided wholeness':

*In this art of life as a whole we have to be both creative artists and skilled artisans. We are thus always in the act of fitting an ever changing reality so that there is no fixed or final goal to be attained. Rather, at each moment the end and the means are both to be described as the action of making every aspect fit.*

[On Creativity, p.86.]

*We thus introduce a new word—artamovement, which means 'the movement of fitting.' And so the metaphysics that we are now exploring can now be expressed as 'all is artamovement.' Not only is inanimate nature created and formed in art movement, but so also is life, in its evolving and developing forms, going on to man, with his capacity for perception, feeling, thought and action. It follows then, of course, that the creation of artifacts by human beings is now to be regarded as a special case of artamovement.*

[On Creativity, p.91]

To his credit—and rare—when it came to the importance of us sharing ideas, David Bohm took the artist as seriously as he did fellow scientists, engaging in a long correspondence, for example, with the American abstract artist Charles Biedermann. It is quite clear from these engagements that Bohm took physical and aesthetic sensation very seriously. Art works not only engage the senses but challenge and expose them to new patterns of sensation and meaning which is all important when new perceptions of fittingness, what Bohm also terms 'penetrating insight,' are 'of a very high order of subtlety, which can easily fail to be taken into account at the level of language and abstract thought.' [*On Creativity* p. 95]. Aware that art has moved on from its preoccupation with visual representation of the last century, Bohm nonetheless finds value in an experience of Georges Rouault's painting, *The Clown* (1907):

*The point was that there were all sorts of patches of colour at the centre of the clown, but there were complimentary patches of colour on the outside. Then I noticed that the eye could move from one to the other, and the picture as a whole began to pulsate. And then suddenly there was a different vision, in which it seemed there was a circulation in the whole room, coming out of the clown and back at me. You see, it created another perception. It seems to me that artists can to some extent explore different forms of sense perception and the meaning of perception.*

From a conversation with the artist Louwrien Wijers,  
*On Creativity* p.109

We might be tempted to think that changes in perception—whether to the physical environment or an artwork—are too ephemeral and non-productive to consider as highly important in any way but this would just be the mechanistic boss reality operating through us, yet again. Bohm makes it clear that a genuinely creative perception has a revolutionary, transformative nature giving the powerful example of Helen Keller, deaf, blind and dumb, and her teacher, Anne Sullivan, who facilitated the perception of an entirely new order of understanding and consciousness for Keller via introducing her to touch-based relationships between a physical thing and a semantic sign language word.

So, Bohm's model of artamovement opens up the potentialities for a 'creative stretch' within the sensorial, perceptive and conceptual spheres of human action and ends any hierarchy in terms of importance between science, philosophy and art. Thinking itself can move into art form:

*[T]hought with totality as its content has to be considered as an artform, like poetry, whose function is primarily to give rise to a new perception, rather than to communicate reflective knowledge of 'how everything is.'*

[*Wholeness & the Implicate Order*, p.63]

These ideas, which I am guilty of not doing full justice to in so brief an account, are particularly significant in supporting my own ponderings into the significance of artist *practices* as a locus of value in their own right. In considering the artist's practice we move away from the art object and into the expanded arena of durational labour, intimacy with matter, the aesthetics of inhabited space and the affected thinkingness that arises as a consequence of and in correspondence to these. Certain artists (and I don't exclusively allude to conceptual artists here) engage with theoretical engagements with re-shap-

ing what Art itself is as a structural force field of sorts, ensuring the force field stays dynamic. Such artists are not so common due to the reasons Bohm gives for creativity itself being rare, but an artist I respect very much in this regard is Robert Filliou (1926-1987):

*I am not just interested in art, but in society of which art is one aspect. I am interested in the world as a whole, a whole of which society is one part. I am interested in the universe, of which the world is only one fragment. I am interested primarily in the Constant Creation of which the universe is only one product.' For Filliou, the work of art was a means of direct action on the world. Like the Brahmin who tries to integrate all the acts in life with the religious rites and duties, Filliou attempted to integrate them with artistic duty, 'without worrying about whether the works are distributed or not': 'When you make, it is art, when you finish, it is non-art, when you exhibit, it is anti-art.' Such insights generate a conceptual structure that activates different ways of living and making art<sup>1</sup>.*

Though artamovement stands as a radical insight and a necessary expansion of current art discourse, it must be said, with humility and fear of being tokenistic, that indigenous cultures have always maintained the importance of living creative lives participating as finite beings in a universe of infinite movement. No doubt Bohm's own engagement with Blackfoot culture deeply influenced his ideas and the words of his friend Leroy Little Bear are deeply stimulating to me as a creature grown up in western constraints:

*Renewal is an important aspect of the Native American paradigm. From the constant flux, Native Americans have detected certain regular patterns, be they seasons, migrations of animals, or cosmic movements. This gives rise to the view that creation is a continuous process but certain regularities that are foundational to our continuing existence must be maintained and renewed. If these foundational patterns are not maintained and renewed...[w]e will be consumed by constant flux...In the Blackfoot mind, what we know is simply a temporary marking in the flux...*

Leroy Little Bear's preface to the Routledge Classic edition of *On Creativity*, p. x

For all that I have written, each individual has to discover creativity in the Bohmian sense for themselves and through some form of active participation as the finite within the movement of the infinite. Similarly, and stranger to consider, each of us has to be awake to the movement of the infinite within us. Along with Bohm's concern to challenge thought as a system and obstructions to undivided wholeness inherent in language itself, we have in his ideas on creativity and artamovement the whole back story to the philosophy and practice of Bohm Dialogue. Dialogue has become an integral aspect of my work as an artist and I situate it within art schools and gallery spaces as a counter-cultural, transformative process wherever I am able. Therefore, it seems 'fitting' to end here with a few quotations from Bohm's writing that make direct links between Dialogue and in creativity:

*The ideal of human behaviour should be that every moment of relationship be creative...People are not really relating to each other freely enough to allow something new and creative to emerge between them. This lack of freedom is often referred to as experienced as a 'difficulty of communication.' But the notion of lack of creativeness is, I think, a more accurate way of describing the trouble*

[Bohm-Biederman Correspondence, p.46]

*The dialogue is potentially a creative art; namely, new orders of necessity may arise if we sustain it...if we sustain a dialogue very seriously, then it becomes possible that there will be something creative and new—which would be a microcosm, the germ, that could then communicate it. In other words, that which appears to be just a lot of meaningless contingency is the field in which some new order of creative necessity might come. And out of that can come a new culture, a new society.*

[David Bohm, *Thought as a System*, p.222]

<sup>1</sup> <https://metropolis.free-jazz.net/robert-filliou-art-is-what-makes-life-more-interesting-than-art/artist-portraits/70/>  
[accessed January 17, 2022]

## The Panel Discussion

**Emma:** Maybe I will begin with a few words, in response to the rising and falling of sensations that I was experiencing in anticipation of this event and whilst listening to Hester's fantastic talk. It is around the dilemma of how to prepare. I'm not a Bohm expert: I've read some of Bohm's writing and I have participated in some Bohm Dialogues though not extensively. However, I am interested within my own artistic and writing practice in the process of dialogue, or—as I would say—in the process of conversation, where conversation means etymologically *to turn about together*. I'm interested in how the process of conversation has the capacity to enable us to reach beyond what we already know and enter the space of something that's not known, that's immanent and specific and occasional to the conversation.

But still I come back to the question of how to prepare for today. During Hester's talk I was feeling nervous, feeling quite under-prepared. And these questions came to my mind: What does preparation mean; or in particular, what does preparation mean for creativity, for a creative mindset? How do I prepare? Am I prepared? And then maybe this morphed a little bit into: How am I willing? Or how am I available? Because on the one hand, if I acknowledge a tendency that I have myself, preparation can manifest as a kind of knowledge acquisition, an act of preparing in advance to acquire the necessary information.

Shortly before today's talk, Bohm's book *On Creativity* arrived in the post, and there was such a temptation to flick through the pages and quickly 'gen up' on the subject, or to read through my materials, to try and almost rehearse a sense of how I understand Bohm's writing on creativity in relation to my own practice. But I know also from my experience of Bohm Dialogue that this is not the route to take. If there were a route, it's actually more the opposite—it's to try and let go as much as possible of all of that and to just meet with Jess and Hester and Alison today and see what arises from that.

But still these questions preoccupy me. Reflecting on the article by David Bohm on creativity that Hester has shared with us in advance, I suppose that one of the entry points for me is the question about what gets in the way of creativity. That feels really pressing. If only we could get out of the way, get ourselves out of the way, then creativity would be much more possible. So, thinking about my own apprehensions and anxieties about this conversation together, it is this which gets in the way. On the one hand, this sense of apprehension can be to do with feeling a need to prove something and on the other hand, the need to protect something. Both of these things—proving and protecting oneself—are about the ego in the way, about not wanting to look stupid, they manifest a kind of negative self-consciousness. So, I'll begin with this as a kind

of caveat, a kind of confession of sorts. This question of preparedness: How am I prepared and what does preparedness mean in the spirit of Dialogue and in the spirit of creativity?

**Jessica:** I would like to say thank you, Emma, because I also had that exact same feeling of nervousness and the exact same question in my mind: How do I prepare for an event where I'm not actually being asked to prepare? And, of course, coming from a slightly different place, not being an artist as such but working very much with creativity and Bohm, there is so much I could say about my own work or my own thinking and I'm trying to hold that back to come with that open, curious mind and to be in a dialogic state. But then to feel that kind of nervousness that I wouldn't have anything intelligent to say or listening very carefully to Hester and waiting for the resonance. And it wasn't always there because we wanted so much to be in this dialogic place that doesn't always arise when we are talking about things out there, as opposed to things from here (points to heart).

So I think coming with this intention to just be present and notice, which I think is so essential to creativity, because that's when new things come in when we're able to hold an empty space, to allow new things to emerge. That flow of meaning that is so central to Dialogue can only flow if we're open. But that requires us to hold the unknown which I think is something we are not very good at doing generally in society, and that's the thing that most struck me rereading the 'On Creativity' essay. It was very timely for me writing my PhD proposal—we are so governed by the mechanical mind, it's so unnatural and I find myself often fighting against it, especially in the last eighteen months spending so much time looking into a computer and working very hard and being governed so much more by productivity and time.

This mechanical mind that goes against how I would like to be in the world which is much more attuned to nature and to a different kind of flow; the kind of flow that Hester mentioned in terms of the Indigenous ways of being in the world. I feel now we can get into the flow, that was enabled by sharing part of your experience of what was happening in your body, because it's not just mind. It's also what is happening in our bodies and being able to share that.

**Alison:** I think this kind of nervous apprehension, the kind of sense of pressure building up is where we are beginning, where this Dialogue is opening. The preparation—I read the essay, I was underlining every other line with a 'yes! yes! yes!', and I've written notes about how it relates to my work, but that is nothing to do with a certain preparation. I also went for a walk. Talking about flow, I walked down to the little river five minutes away from me. I put my hand in the river and I felt that flow... I'm not particu-



*Dive, Alison Churchill, December 2020*

larly articulate about this but I'm pleased that Hester in her talk said that it's virtually impossible to talk about, so that relieves me. But it's wonderful that we now have this view of the four speakers, of just each other, and there's a field that is created between us and you can feel it kind of starting to ring but there's a nervous tension.

**Emma:** Maybe I can say more about that kind of apprehension, of nervousness, or the trepidation, or the feeling of unpreparedness that I was talking about, or the question of what kind of preparedness is called for because this feeling isn't only unique to this specific situation. It feels as if it's one of many critical and creative contexts in which I work and in a sense there's an encounter with these experiences over and over, as part of the process.

I guess one of the things that I'm not sure about is whether these experiences of trepidation or apprehension are a personal deficit or whether there's something about this threshold that is somehow necessary to navigate as part of the creative process. A lot of my work involves collaboration with other artists and that sense of what it means to encounter another artist and work with another artist and hope for the possibility of something arising through that encounter which is neither belonging to me nor belonging to her or belonging to them, but is somehow emerging in and through the nature of the encounter that we have.

And how again, if I'm honest, so many obstacles get in the way of that or have to be navigated before the process can begin. And again, often in my own experience, the obstacles often come as a result of striving to validate or affirm of one's self, one's own history. Maybe that's what it is—affirming of one's history, one's praxis. A sense of 'This is what I've done before, which gives me the credentials for being here.' I think that this issue of resting on one's history or knowledge is present in Bohm's article on creativity, in the sense that he says this history has to be let go of a little bit—that the known has to be let go of, or at least there needs to be something about loosening the grip on it to allow for something that's new.

**Hester:** Not to make this too complicated but in turning away from our habitual dependency on the known as a guarantor of coherence, we need to be careful not to fall into another block to creativity. I mean that habit in the art world right now where I think we entertain ourselves a lot with the notion of the 'unknown' without going very far into it or risking becoming unknowable in our very selves. What I mean is that there is a risk of a habit of self-satisfaction with our relationship to the unknown which is just as problematic as that with the known.

If we look at the way plants grow—and Bohm's quite clear that processes in nature are eminently creative—there is a friction between flamboyant openness and blossoming through constriction. I mean the way a tree might

have to grow to avoid a boulder and it might look quite tortuous in shape as a result but maybe that tree has had a fantastic time over the years having to move in the world in a completely new if difficult way. But we tend to avoid that sort of discomfort, or that's what I'm thinking now in response to what was just said. So yes to the creative possibilities via the unknown but only if we are prepared to be very uncomfortable.

**Emma:** As you're saying, in the art world there's a certain rhetoric of not knowing and the unknown, to which I have contributed. However, I was thinking, what if we shift the term 'unknown' for the 'alive'—that suddenly feels much more interesting. I think that in the sense of letting go of what has been, what's at stake is not so much the entering into the unknown as entering into the alive, and that this experience is also equally full of trepidation because you don't know what the alive is going to bring.

I'm on a retreat at the moment—the retreat is on inspiration. Earlier today, I was talking with fellow retreatants, describing how sometimes in my own experience with the rising of inspiration I can also feel a tendency to try and manage it or even control it. The image that was coming up in the discussion earlier was that of being at the edge of a river—a very strong river—that really you want to dive into but it's really frightening. Maybe this comes back to Alison's image of putting the hand in the river.

There's something about standing on the edge of the river, where there's a certain stability, and it can be very exciting to look at the coursing of the river as it's moving past, but to actually take a leap into it, to actually *become* the river... Maybe there is some connection to movement that you were talking about, Hester. That it's not that a person is creative, but rather that creativity *moves through* the person.

But to allow creativity to move through you, you've got to be willing to jump into it somehow and at times my own experience feels more like paddling at the edge. Again, maybe there's a threshold here, in terms of what's at stake; what's at stake in this space between the mechanical and the creative? How do we navigate from the safe banks of the mechanical—the bank of security, stability, routine, predictability? How do we take the leap because it feels as though it's quite counterintuitive to do that, yet on the other hand, it's a leap into aliveness so it should be the most intuitive thing to do?

**Alison:** I think it's actually the hardest—it's going through these waves upon waves of inertia and holding yourself at the river's edge. Because when it happens it's not difficult, it's the most simple thing in the world. It can't be striven for, and you can't just not do anything. It's not just letting go, because as you say there's that kind of nervous tension. It is whole, there's a wholeness and it's like a download, it just comes through. In Eastern thinking rather than

Western thinking there's this idea of *wu wei* in Chinese and *buji* in Japanese which is the action of no action. That's got something to do with it. I'm not saying that is what it is, I don't know, but it is creative action that's naturally arising.

In the essay what I really enjoyed was Bohm talking about this *natural* order of the mind, and the opposite of what he was saying was natural is what we're in ninety-nine percent of the time—that *I'm* in ninety-nine percent of the time—which is distraction. I always feel I'm kind of flapping on the surface. I want to go deep and it's like I've got water wings on holding me up and I want to go deeper but not knowing how to. He says that the natural order of the mind is that wholeness, and it's not just contained within the mind it's kind of wholeness seeking wholeness.

**Hester:** This idea of undivided wholeness is so important to all of Bohm's ideas. For him it's both the whole *and* it's also the individual, the particulars. It's totally paradoxical to be both but it feels right somehow. We can't sense that whole unless we also work with being particular. Otherwise, I sort of struggle very much with most notions of wholeness because there's so much gumph around the 'I must be whole!' I do appreciate that this always comes from good intentions but it's using the same subjective willing and orders of language-thought that caused the fragmentation in the first place. Not that there is any right way to do this and my super-critical stance is both a blessing and a curse—I may be like some strange cartoon-like creature who has run off the bankside but instead of falling into the river is just doing lots of movements suspended in air—actually maybe that's not a bad place to be?

It brings me back to Bohm Dialogue because this is where being both individual and whole can be tangibly sensed. When Dialogue is really working, when everyone's really attuning, you can just feel that thing where the cells of your body and the cells of the air, of everything else start to connect. What's interesting about that experience is that it may not bring anything specific to the group in terms of an idea or content of discussion but it does literally physically move something. This is when people say later that they got goosebumps. I remember the first time I did a weekend Dialogue—it was with the Lancaster group—after I somehow wasn't exhausted but even felt crystal clear in a way I had never experienced before. My brain felt the way my body feels when I've done a really good run. I'm saying experiencing undivided wholeness is carnally good for us. And now I'm thinking it must be similar with creativity. That feels so right, Emma, that creativity has to move through us.

**Jessica:** I think listening to the three of you speaking as artists and myself perhaps not as an artist today so much—

and Emma you talk about what's at stake—and so for me I'm listening and tuning into what it is we can learn from artists and what it means to be creative. At the moment I work predominantly in international development with people who are desperately trying to solve the climate crisis and they throw the word innovation around left, right and centre, but they never talk about creativity, and we never go to those underlying causes and values and beliefs. Everything stays the same, it's on the riverbank, it's familiar, it's mechanistic, it's doing what's been done before, hoping for a better outcome.

And it's that standing on the riverbank, that looking at that moving river, that people are so afraid to do anything new because it's going to break them apart and we don't have the emotional resilience and skills, we don't understand how to put ourselves back together again, and it changes everything in our very existence and being. We have to be open to that and that's what the artist and that's what creativity allows people to do—you are still afraid of the unknown but there's something about the process and being brave enough and courageous enough to go into it and enjoy it as well. I think there's that love of creativity and curiosity, the things that we also see in Dialogue like being curious as opposed to being judgmental. Allowing new things to emerge is a process and it's dynamic. I think so many of us are not in our dynamic process as human beings. We are rigid, we're mechanistic, we like order and control because that's what is familiar and it feels safe, but what Bohm talks about in the essay is that we've tricked ourselves into thinking that that's the natural order of things when it's not. We can't recognize creativity and we can't recognize what is natural because we are so governed by this mechanistic narrative and way of being and thinking, and that's what we need to break free from and I think we will only do that through the creative process.

**Emma:** There's something about what you said there around almost not feeling like the artist, in a sense there was something there that resonated for me in relation to Bohm's article. He talks about how quick within the process of schooling we're taught to conform in a way, and that conformity and fear of making mistakes really is one of the biggest inhibitions to creativity, against creativity. But I was also thinking that there's something else that happens early on in schooling which is to do with siphoning off creativity into specific *forms*. So that creativity becomes synonymous with the actual form it takes, the artwork, the poem. I think that very early on in schooling there is this sense that some people have a creative capacity and therefore make these various forms and other people don't.

One of the things that seems very liberating about Bohm's thinking is that it rescues creativity from its relationship to static form and realigns it much more to



the notion of force. Creativity as force, as a kind of operation, as a power. This is interesting because in these terms it becomes much more possible to explore the capacities of creativity in everyday life. In a sense, the idea of the artist—this is also an interest in my own work—the process of being an artist provides a context for exploring certain things which are less possible to really dig deep into in other contexts of life.

But at the same time, I think that the artwork has its own limitations which are not to be under-acknowledged. I think it might be possible to say that many artists aren't truly creative. Many artists work in the mechanical mode that Bohm describes even though they are creating art forms. Here, the sense of the known and the repetition of the known can also be understood in terms of artistic repertoire, which I think is common in the art world. So, I think there are some interesting myths to dispel. On the one hand, not all artists are truly creative, and on the other hand, creativity is not only to do with the form it takes (i.e. art), but could actually be more like a force that everyone has the capacity to access. It's the metaphor of the river again—maybe we can all jump in the river and that feels quite liberating. I don't think that's taught enough. That would be a real intervention—to encourage and teach creativity as force at an early age rather than focusing on the specific forms that it might take.

**Jessica:** That is so resonant. It's like poetry; that Dialogue allows us to go beyond the creative form to the creative force. You know I actually did go to art school. I went to art school for a whole year and I left because I didn't think I had anything to make art about. I was one of those people that was put in the category at school of 'you make nice things that look nice.' And I knew I hadn't lived enough, and I hadn't developed my creative original mind. I could make stuff, but I didn't have those skills that you're just saying we should teach. Now I've come full circle, feeling that creative force and working with it not just in myself but with other people and being able to show people they don't have to be creative in that conventional sense, but that we are all creative and that we can use making and drawing and so many aspects of creative expression to understand ourselves, to relate to each other, to understand the world and that also shifts our perception.

I think there's something that's important to me about how we relate to the natural world and the language that so many people use around the natural world such as 'weeds' or 'overgrown' or 'ugly' or 'vile.' This very violent language is then reflected in how we are actually treating the natural world. When people—people in the western world that is, of course not Indigenous people—become aware of that use of language, then we can have the artistic creative perception to see such things as beauty. To see a little thing that you might call a weed as beautiful and part of a thriving natural ecosystem, that natural order of

things and our interdependence and interrelatedness to it and that wholeness, then it sort of feels like it's falling into place. And there's one more thing I'd like to bring in on the topic of wholeness: Murray Bookchin in his book on social ecology talks of—it's not his phrase, I can't remember who he borrowed it from—'a unity of difference.' So he was very against holism in the sense of 'we're all one' because he says, no, we're all different but with that there's a unity and this kind of equality of the un-equals as opposed to thinking that we're all equal is what I find really powerful. And I think that Dialogue as a process allows us to see that we are all different, we have different experiences that give us different worldviews but through Dialogue we can bring that kind of cohesiveness and coherence and shared meaning together in that whole for that period of time and something new may emerge from that wholeness. So I think it's that process of being able to put things together and listen and look at things from different angles that you do as an artist, that force, that creative force can emerge in the Dialogue process as well.

**JESSICA BALL** is a creative facilitator dedicated to working towards positive social and environmental change through transformative learning, dialogue and the value of creativity. Jessica has worked with a diverse range of organisations across sectors from corporate and international development to education and charities. She is currently studying a PhD in ecolinguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, under the supervision of Professor Arran Stubbs, author and founder of the International Ecolinguistics Association. Jessica is researching 'the body, nature and dialogue', an exploration of ecological identity.

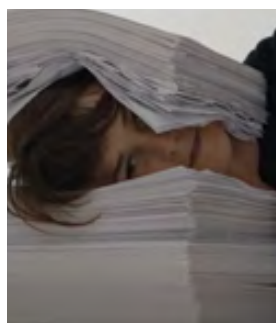
<http://www.creatingmeaning.club/the-founder>



**EMMA COCKER** is a writer-artist and Associate Professor in Fine Art, Nottingham Trent University, whose research focuses on artistic processes and practices, and the performing of 'thinking-in-action' therein. Her practice unfolds restlessly along the threshold between writing/art, including experimental, performative and collaborative approaches. Cocker's writing has been published in *Failure*; *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought*; *Stillness in a Mobile World*; *Hyperdrawing: Beyond the Lines of Contemporary Art*; *Reading/Feeling*; *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*; *The Creative Critic: Writing as/about Practice*, and the solo

collection, *The Yes of the No*. Emma was co-researcher on the artistic research project *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* (2014–2017); a contributing artistic researcher in *Ecologies of Practice*, Research Pavilion, Venice, (2019).

<http://not-yet-there.blogspot.com>



#### **ALISON CHURCHILL**

is a visual artist in Sheffield with a practice exploring the creative force contained in water and the patterns of disruption, coherence and emergence which play out on its surface. She is developing an online collaborative art practice with artists in the UK, which comes out of an over ten-year experiment with four female artists based in the US and Israel exploring the creative process beyond the individual.

Churchill has been involved in a number of projects exploring intersubjective consciousness, including Scott Peck's *Community Building*, Bohm *Dialogue* and *Emergent Dialogue*.

Churchill is a junior Rinzaï Zen teacher and lead regular Zen Brushwork sessions in Sheffield, which involve meditation, energy-raising exercises and calligraphy using a large brush.

<https://www.alisonchurchill.uk>



**HESTER REEVE'S** practice encompasses live art, philosophy, drawing, David Bohm's 'Dialogue' and social sculpture.

**SHE IS** interested in the relationship between critical thinking and human agency in everyday life, particularly when it is risked through the figure of 'the artist' (where what constitutes an artist is broadly conceived and not exclusive to art school training).

Recent public works have been staged at Tanzquartier, Vienna, Tate Britain (working under the umbrella of The Emily Davison Lodge with Olivia Plender) and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Hester Reeve is Reader in Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University.

[www.hesterreeve.com](http://www.hesterreeve.com)