Water Ways: From Mt. Constitution by Meg Kaczyk

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF

Art and the Environment

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Exploring the Intersection of Art and the Environment

An inquiry into how art might move environmental missions forward,
sharing our hope for a healthy world

Artists:
David Eisenhour, Lisa Gilley, Margie McDonald

Organizations:
Richard Tucker, Executive Director Jefferson Land Trust,
Anne Murphy, Board President, NW Straits Foundation
Laurie McKenzie, NW Research and Education Associate, Organic Seed Alliance

Moderated by Meg Kaczyk

> *"Lately I have been thinking that the point must be reached when scientists, politicians, artists, philosophers, men of religion, and all those who work in the fields should gather here, gaze over these fields, and talk things over together."*
>
> - Maasanobu Fukuoka (The One-Straw Revolution)

Introduction

This Art Salon conversation about the intersection of art-making and environmental concern was a public outreach event led by artist Meg Kaczyk as part of her May 2019 residency at Centrum, Fort Worden, Port Townsend.

The purpose of the panel discussion was to foster an open-ended dialogue among artists and environmental non-profit organizations to feed collaborative thinking and inspiration. For Kaczyk, the purpose of interchange was also to prompt visual inspiration and uncover potential collaborations in her work.

As Terry Tempest Williams says in her book, *The Hour of Land*: "Collaboration is the only way forward."

The Environmental Organizations

Laurie McKenzie is NW Research and Education Associate for the Organic Seed Alliance. OSA advances ethical seed solutions to meet food and farming needs in a changing world.

Anne Murphy is Board President of the NW Straits Foundation, a non-profit partner with the NW Straits Initiative, that helps local communities protect marine resources, restore shorelines, and recover derelict fishing gear.

Richard Tucker, Executive Director, Jefferson Land Trust, a conservation organization committed to maintaining wetlands, floodlands, farmlands, wildlife corridors, and scenic areas from inappropriate development forever.

The Artists

David Eisenhour ("Ike"), is a sculptor whose work connects to the natural world through magnification and a narrative on environmental degradation.

Lisa Gilley is a contemporary landscape painter, known for her work around protected wilderness lands, or lands in need of protection. She's held multiple Artist Residencies at National Parks and is represented by Woodside Braseth Gallery in Seattle.

Margie McDonald is a sculptor and wearable art maker. A pioneer in the wearable art world, she won best-in-show at PT's 2019 Wearable Art Show for a collaborative piece called "Mycologistical". Margie's organic sculptures use upcycled materials and crochet techniques.

The Moderator

Meg Kaczyk is a painter whose current work reflects themes of good water, good land and good food. She recently completed a two-week residency at Centrum where she explored the role of art and collaboration in addressing the climate crisis. Meg teaches at Port Townsend School of the Arts, and exhibits at Northwind Arts Center and other regional venues.

The Conversation

Meg Kaczyk (MK): I invited these artists because I know them. And I love their work. And I invited these organizations because I know them and I love what they do. Also, the organizations' spheres of good land, good water, and good farming align with painting themes I'm working on right now – Big Fruit, Water Ways (Homage to the Salish Sea), and Madrona.

Ike, your art forms are inspired by the environment. How'd you get going in that direction? Did you start there, or was there one visual moment when something propelled you?

David 'Ike' Eisenhour (IE): I grew up in rural Pennsylvania. I spent a lot of time in the woods, it was that type of a childhood. I know that was a big influence. And another big influence was traveling across the country with my dad to visit my uncle in Estancia, New Mexico. I remember the first time we went to Santa Fe and looked at the galleries. We went to Gerald Peters Gallery and saw some of the old Masters that painted naturalism. That was probably my first thought that I want to be an artist and make something dealing with the natural world.

MK: So you saw natural art first and then…

IE: Black and white photography might have been the first thing. I was a big fan of Ansel Adams when I was a kid. I had a friend whose father was a journalist and he had a darkroom in his house and he taught me how to develop black and white film. I was 12 years old at the time and I did that up through the end of high school.

MK: When you started your work, you always had natural themes?

IE: Pretty much. I liked to take pictures in the winter time when it was stark, and we had a lot of snow and a lot of drifts. I experimented with abstraction, and I am starting to go back to that with a lot of natural forms now.

MK: Richard, how you did you get into your area of work?

Richard Tucker (RT): I grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia on the Jersey side of the river. My father worked two jobs and was also in school, so we didn't have time to go hiking, we never went camping. Living in the concrete suburbs of Philadelphia, there weren't a lot of natural areas, so I saw my first cow at the Philadelphia Zoo.

I gained my love for the outdoors through books and photographs in books. There's one book in particular called "America's Wonderlands", by National Geographic. I was in second grade when it came out, in 1963. I was fascinated by the pictures of the mountains which I had never seen before and the streams and the waterfalls – I checked it out so many times from the library, that they called my mother and said you need to return this book!

It wasn't until I was in college that I actually went camping for the first time, or I even took a hike for the first time. So, books and photographs are how I got into it, and it's much better in person.

It wasn't until I was in college that I actually went camping or even took a hike for the first time. Books and photographs are how I got into it, and it's much better in person.

MK: What I am hearing from both of you is the importance of exposure to art and nature when young.

Anne, how'd you get into your interest?

Anne Murphy (AM): I grew in the Ohio River Valley, in Louisville, Kentucky, in an old residential area, surrounded by a lot of parks. Because of the generation I grew up in, I could wander, and I did, all the time. I just went wherever I felt led. By creeks and openings in the trees and so on.

Nature was something I learned to trust early on. I learned to hear it and look into it. I will also say we had a really good art theatre where I grew up in Louisville, and I went to a lot of movies and I loved

old black and white movies, and some of the early photojournalists really inspired me too.

MK: Laurie, what about you?

Laurie McKenzie (LMcK): I am a Pacific Northwest native. Born in Portland, Oregon and spent my early childhood in the Tri-Cities, and then moved to Corvallis, Oregon for the rest of my childhood.

I always spent a lot of time outside – my dad worked for the Environmental Protection Agency, so I grew up in a very environmentally-minded environment. I was very fortunate to have a lot of adventure experiences and live in beautiful Pacific Northwest places.

After environmental studies in college, I went and worked on a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm where I met Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seeds. I started working there with him and his wife Karen. And that is how I discovered seeds. I knew I loved food, I knew I loved farming, I knew nothing about seeds or plant breeding.

I love seeing people learn these new skills that are going to keep engaging, really, for the rest of their life.

I like to say, I learned the art of plant breeding from Frank and I learned the science of plant breeding in grad school. I was fortunate to find a grad program at Oregon State that was specified for organic seed production. I did some collaborative work with OSA on a project that funded my graduate work and then was hired come up here and work for them.

At OSA, I lead plant-breeding projects, and teach plant breeding, seed saving, and seed production. It is one of most empowering things that I've ever done. I love seeing people learn these new skills that are going to keep engaging them, really, for the rest of their life.

MK: Lisa, I have a question for you. Was your visual direction inspired by urgency at the environment? Or was it more… beauty?

Lisa Gilley (LG): Well, since we are all talking about where we grew up… I grew up in the Skagit Valley. I grew up on working on a farm. I used to race around the farmlands as a kid and walk the dikes and spend time in estuaries.

I went off to school to become a graphic designer and I worked in commercial art for many years. When I decided I wanted to go back to painting – I never lost drawing or doing my art on the side – I just went back to the thing I knew, which was drawing farms. I started painting a lot of farmlands, Skagit Valley, all the Northwest sort of things. Sometimes I'd have a human element in it.

I started realizing during this process I was making a story, a narrative, of farmlands …a story of "wouldn't it be great if we could stop and pause with these lands and keep them this way for a long time"? So, I didn't intentionally say, "I am going to paint a farm because I want to conserve farms." I just painted farms because I believe that when you do anything in life you should do it with a passion and do it from your heart. So, I just painted farms because that is what I wanted to paint, then it evolved.

For the last four or five years, I've been painting a lot of National Parks. But what I am really painting is wilderness. While I was painting or drawing farmlands, I tried to make them timeless narratives.

I'm an outdoors person – I hike, I fish and I ride horses in the mountains. So, when I started painting wilderness, I just naturally went to National Parks. I decided I'll paint Yellowstone, the Cascades and so on. Then one day, I went up to Alaska. My husband was working on a boat in Seward, and he said, hey come on up! It should take about 2 hours to drive down from Anchorage. Well, it took me 8½ hours because I am just the worst person to take a vacation with, because…

MK: You were taking pictures?

LG: Yes! That part of Alaska down the Turnagain Arm is sort of a National Park on steroids. I was so excited about wilderness. I did some glacier tours, saw what was going on with global warming and all the other conversations of wilderness. I decided I will just start painting wilderness. I just ditched

the human component. I went for straight wilderness paintings.

Then, I just started painting. I started with the Alaska series, then along the West Coast, and other special places that I've traveled to. I applied for an Art Residency at the Grand Canyon, and I got it! I was kind of surprised, I got this great residency!

As I was applying, it was the Centennial of the National Parks. So, I decided to do a show about the National Parks at my gallery in Seattle. And, as I started to prepare for the show, I got another residency at Zion National Park, so the continuum happened.

When you do an Artist-in-Residence at the National Parks, you are a Ranger. You get a little outfit, you get into the Park and into what they're doing. I have to be very careful about talking about politics and all that sort of stuff.

As part of this experience, I was getting solid in understanding the Antiquities Act and what was happening. That is, the President has always had a right to say, "I'm going to make a National Monument, to protect that piece of land." It's a rah-rah positive thing. Well, there's always people who are trying to pick at that. There's always money behind it, and it usually has to do with natural resources … oil or maybe coal or land. So, after I got Grand Canyon residency, it happened that we lost some Monument status. And the fear became real for me. I felt, "woah, wait a minute, I've been to that place. I've been to Bear's Ears, I've been to Staircase Escalante." I was heartbroken about it. So now, yes, I think I am an advocate painter.

I am trying to show what those beautiful places are. I am going to Capital Reef next and a lot people don't even know where that park is. It's safe for now, but there's a lot of stuff that we don't even know what's happening. So, I can start a conversation with my painting, but I'm not direct.

My goal is, with all my skill and my training, how can I paint that painting in a way that can make a person pause? If I can make you pause for a minute and question, where is that? I planted a seed.

One of my last talks at Zion was great. The staff were so into the environmental aspect at the Parks that they said, "hey, let's put posters up about her at every single trailhead." I couldn't go anywhere in the Park, people were walking up to me, "oh you're Lisa Gilley, you're the Artist-in-Residence!" I'm not kidding, I talked to thousands of people. It was great.

As a result, turnout at my talks was standing room only! I said to the group: "I don't care how you voted. We all have one thing in common. We all love parks. We're all here because we make trips to places like this because we love them, right? We all agree?" And everyone said, "yup!" I said, "no matter what you do, keep that in mind. I'm not going to tell you how to vote. But if you find the person you are voting for is not going down the road that is strong with your belief about these places … you need to write a letter, or you need to talk to them about it, so they maybe can hear your voice too." I got a standing ovation for that. It's really important.

So that's the story. It evolved, it evolved. And I still just paint to paint. I just paint what I love.

How can I paint that painting in a way that can make a person pause? If I can make you pause for a minute and question, where is that? I planted a seed.

MK: You have to love what you do. Evolving our art from love is one of my hypotheses.

Margie, you're a little different than Ike and Lisa in your work. It doesn't overtly depict nature, but I would call it organic. The shapes, especially your sculptures are very organic. I have a quote from you, "Every material has a unique nature that can be drawn out and given new life." The work itself is an upcycling and acknowledgement of environmental care. But is there a narrative thread? Is there an organic inspiration? Do the materials come first?

MMcD: Right now, materials almost always come first.

But, going back to the childhood theme, I grew up in nature. I grew up in Newfoundland in Eastern Canada in a rural community of 16 houses. Everybody knew everyone. We all grew up in the woods. When your chores were done, you were gone to the woods, you just had to get out of the way. We had the average-sized family in the community which was seven…I thought I can't believe these families of 2 and 3 kids! Whew! A bedroom to yourself!

I grew up playing with rocks and sticks. For me art in the beginning was just those natural things.

I grew up playing with rocks and sticks. For me, art in the beginning was just those natural things. Because I never saw art. I saw paint-by-number. I saw a few paintings. I saw one painting at my school. But it really didn't exist because in that rural Newfoundland community, music and storytelling were more the art form, and not a lot of people-made stuff. What people made were crafts. I knew how to knit, how to crochet, how to sew.

I always made things by hand, with my hands. If there are any Canadians in the audience… Mr. Dress Up was my inspiration for drawing, from watching him draw. You know, watching him make puppets and everything.

My final year of high school, a visual arts course started at a community college in the next town over. That's what put me down that path. I became an art teacher and taught in Newfoundland for 6 years. When I realized that I could do it with my eyes closed, I needed to do something different so I went out into the world and sailed across the Atlantic and other stuff.

Twenty years ago, my husband came to Port Townsend for boat school and I saw Brian Toss doing a yacht rigging demonstration at the Wooden Boat Festival. It was this old mast and he was talking about what happens if you pull this wire, how the mast bends, and I thought, "wow, that's really interesting!" So I hung around the shop until he gave me a job.

When I learned how to splice stainless steel wire, I thought "oh my god, this is weaving! I'm just weaving stainless steel wire." I started playing with it, and realized that I could play and not think about what it was… I was not making a "thing." Because I grew up in this utilitarian place: you're making a thing, you're making a useful thing…

MK: Instead it's like the thing is making itself…

MMcD: Yeah. Why would you just make this useless thing…like a painting? When I started playing with wire, I realized this is my medium. This is what I learned in textile, except in wire. It stands up by itself, it is wonderfully three-dimensional.

Once I started using wire, I started going to scrap yards. My art got material driven. Because there is so much interesting stuff in scrap yards that are available to play with. One thing I have come to look out for, environmentally, is that some of it is super toxic. Back when Boeing Surplus was open, I had thousands of these little computer parts... they were like pretty little green lentils…

And then a little while ago I had a health issue, and I thought, what could cause this? And I looked it up… resistors and capacitors. So, I try to be very conscious of the health issue. But, I also like to recycle because I don't like spending the money to make things out of things that already exist. I work with the students in the Wearable Art Show, and I tell them "Don't spend money! There's stuff out there, let's just make it out of something else."

MK: It makes them look at materials in a different way.

I have a question for someone from the organizations. Anne, there's something called "eco-phobia", have you heard of that?

AM: I have never had any first-hand experience of it here. I've had more first-hand experience of, "I can't do anything about what's going on".

MK: Yes, "eco-anxiety" is, of course, the genesis of this evening. My own eco-anxiety. This crisis is so big. How do I do anything about it?

I learned about the term "eco-phobia" from my daughter's work as a librarian in Baltimore. Most urban kids never go out in nature, right? Eco-phobia is a fear of nature. So, the Baltimore Library partners with parks and organizations to help youth feel more comfortable in nature. But I don't know if that is really so relevant for this town. That's the question. Here, we're surrounded by nature. But eco-phobia is real and I wonder if it's a factor in the environmental crisis.

So, the question is if anybody in the organizations has seen eco-phobia in your work here?

RT: We work in four school districts in East Jefferson County. We also have a partnership with a local YMCA, to get kids outdoors. Half the children in this community are on subsidized meals. The parents don't have the ability to take them outdoors because they're always working, just like my father was always working.

So, a lot of the kids we take outdoors have this trepidation, because they are going into the unknown. They pass by these forests, they pass by these streams, they don't get out of the car and walk through them, so there is this phobia, you know, they're always afraid this cougar's going to come by. There's this fear that these creatures are there that they don't understand. But we try to get the school kids in all 4 districts out at least once or twice a year for an outdoor experience, and in our new preserves that we're opening up on Marrowstone Island, and Center Valley Road area, we will have Nature Exploration Areas where kids can get off the trail and go touch plants and be in the middle of trees and experience what it's like in the forest. Trying to help them overcome eco-phobia.

MK: Anne, you experience eco-anxiety?

AM: Very much so. I think everyone has eco-anxiety. It is a really good question in this venue to help people realize that there is a role for you. Given a chance, I think everybody feels their connection to their place of birth and to their planet. But the world spins by so fast, we're not hearing a lot of good stories, we're hearing a lot of scary stories.

So, I think it's up to us to help assure people we all have a role. I get this question a lot – what do you do when you know the orcas are disappearing? It's going to be a razor's shave, whether they make it or not. People in the know are not optimistic, so it's a really sad thing, and it's really depressing day after day after day, so we have to find our strength around how we can be advocates and help nature in any way we can. There's some really obvious things. Don't forget to go to those places you love, go see the salmon return, go sit under a cedar tree, whatever! Get re-charged, because there's a lot that you can do, and you can help other people do. I think it's very important not to let people lose their hope and feel powerless. Even if every bad projection comes true, how are we going to go through the next 20, 50, 100 years? That is so important.

Half the children in this community are on subsidized meals. The parents don't have the ability to take them outdoors because they're always working, just like my father was always working.

MK: That's a good point. You have to live it, and there's some pretty amazing people doing amazing things out there.

LMcK: I agree with you. We all have eco-anxiety, and if we don't, we should. I think one of the absolutely best therapies is to plant things. And, engage with life. The connection and engagement with something alive is so vital.

MK: Ike, I heard a term used in conjunction with a show that you were part of. "Neo-naturalist" movement. Can you talk about that? What is that exactly? Does it exist? Is it made up?

IE: It's an invention. But it's also something I'd like to revisit at some point. I came up with the concept of getting a group of artists together whose work is about connecting people with the natural world. We had a small group of artists with the idea to engage people and get them to start asking questions. I think if the Neo-Naturalists was a movement that would catch on, that's what

it would be about. Artists that want to connect with people and make them want to start a conversation.

MK: You know, the thing about movements – appropriately, they're named after the fact. So, maybe there is something happening, we just haven't really stepped back and looked at it.

LG: The art world has gone through all kinds of movements. I don't know if it's a movement yet. But I'm in the Seattle gallery world so I see things going on, in other galleries, around the country and around the world. And I think there is a subtle movement of people coming back to what I would consider tangible art. Things that are grounding to people. Because maybe we are having eco-anxiety, and we are looking. The minimalist movement is kind of gone. It's not tangible, maybe, to someone.

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MK: I like your use of the words grounded and tangible. Because if there's anxiousness, you want to breathe.

LG: There's a whole new upcoming of young people, and they have eco-anxiety and they want something to soothe the soul. Some of my biggest followers are outdoors people and they are mostly between the ages of 30 and 55. That's kind of unheard in the art world now. I don't know what that movement is yet. I am not saying it is nature painting, but it is something people are looking for, something to feel good about, to connect to.

MK: About regionalism in art: are people drawn to pieces that portray where they're from? Or is it more universal than that?

IE: I think people are drawn to a wide variety of things in the natural world. For instance, I did a series of seeds. This is imagery that looks like some kind of organic abstraction but it's taken far out of context. It is looked at under a microscope, but then it is done at 8 inches or 6 inches or 10 inches. The latest one is a poppy seed and it is about 3 foot across. People look at it and they're attracted to it because it follows a repetition of patterns in the natural world that is just contiguous. Like a snail shell spiral and a spiral galaxy. So, you can approach naturalism and attracting people and making them look at the natural world in many different ways. That's more universal.

For instance, there's a piece about the dice that are on the presentation [behind us], that doesn't look like a naturalist piece at all, but they're carved out of anthracite coal. The narrative becomes obvious to you once you think about it. Or at least it will make you think about it… why did you carve out of coal? Well, because we're gambling with carbon. We're gambling the entire planet's worth of carbon, and it's a perfect medium to say that in.

MK: So there are universal themes that are not geographically based…but then there is the whole notion of a sense of place. People feel drawn to their place and where they're from.

IE: That's an interesting term to use. Because that's what I called my first Washington State Arts Commission for Ocasta Elementary School. You could call what I did there regionalism, because I picked detritus off the beach that were mostly calcifiers (which fit well into the theme of ocean acidification). I also had the kids gather stuff off the beach and I chose 5 items out of that collecting. The idea was for 16 bronzes on the wall– some only at 3 foot level – so even the kindergarteners can walk up to them. I entitled it "Sense of Place", because that was what I wanted to do, was to give those kids some sort of sense of place that they lived in.

MK: Clearly, work that conveys a sense of place, wherever that place is, is emotionally resonant for those who live there.

Lisa, with the National Parks or the wilderness land you paint… have you noticed what resonates with people?

LG: That's a really good question. I don't always know when people purchase my work who they are exactly, and what their backgrounds are. Maybe they feel, "I went to the Grand Canyon and I had this experience as a kid"… or maybe people buying my work that have never been to that location.

What I like most about painting these other places are conversations that happen. Sometimes during a show, someone will say, "well, where is that? I've never been to Alaska", and we start talking and I tell them my experience there, and that is planting a seed, I'm telling people to go outdoors and check these places out. Trying to urge that awareness of these places. Even if you don't go, you should still want to protect the Grand Canyon from uranium mining, save our National Monuments, even if you've never been there.

MK: Richard, do you find regionalism has a role for environmental organizations? Do you think people care more because it's here? Sort of the opposite of "not in my back yard."

RT: People who live here love where they live. And it is special. We've got thriving farms in Chimacum, we've got working forests, we've got habitat protections going on, and we've got salmon coming back to Chimacum Creek after being wiped out in the 1980's. That's significant and that's all because of organizations partnering together. This peninsula that we live on is one of the best places, if not the best place, to sequester carbon in our forests, in the world. And a lot of people don't know that, so the more we can do to protect these natural areas, that's what we can do to play our part in dealing with climate change.

MK: So, one way to address eco-anxiety is to be regional, to say "this is our little corner". It doesn't mean you can't go bigger but if you can go small, that's something. Are there any differences in this attitude between west and east coasts?

RT: Before I moved back to the Northwest, I spent 5 years in Georgia and 5 years in Alabama, where the idea of conservation was totally different.

I worked for the Nature Conservancy, the Land Trust, and with the Trust for Public Land in Georgia. All organizations that create parks, green space and natural area protection. It was a struggle. We were told, for example, we could not use the words "climate change", with state employees of the state of Alabama. This was 5 years ago. We were told by Public Service Commissioner of Alabama that climate change was a hoax because the rainbow was God's promise He would never destroy the earth again. We were doing great conservation work, but it wasn't easy. There wasn't a sense of "we need to protect these wonderful places". Alabama is one of the fifth most bio-diverse states in the country. It has the most diverse fresh water mussels in the country, but they're also the most endangered. Whereas up here, there is an ecological ethic that for me, in this part of my career, I'm just thrilled to be here. Friends of mine say, "Richard, you just live in a bubble." And I say, "Yes I do, and it's a great place to be!"

One way to address eco-anxiety is to be regional, to say 'this is our little corner'. It doesn't mean you can't go bigger, but if you can go small, that's something.

I claim the Peninsula as my home. I cross the Hood Canal Bridge, and I'm home. It's not Jefferson County, it's not Klallam County, it's not Mason County, it's the Peninsula. It gives me comfort to see the great work that's happening here through all these different organizations to protect and bring back the Sound, to protect farmland, to protect working forestland. It's all important, and it's all happening right here in our backyard.

MK: And it could be a model, if anyone would look.

Margie, you are a huge collaborator… have you worked with any environmental non-profits in the area?

MMcD: I collaborated with Glo Lamson and Karen Hackenberg on a piece that was called "Plasticaria" that we made for the Anacortes Arts Festival. They picked artist teams to make art pieces that were collected from the beach – it was

a beach clean-up project. We used bottles we collected from the beach as well as water bottles we collected ourselves, and we made a really giant sculpture. We learned about chelates and how plastic gets really tiny, and where it gets into the food stream. Then I was able to go into the schools, where the kids made little plastic jellyfish and learned about what is happening with plastics.

Also, in a collaboration with three other people, we made a shelf mushroom-inspired piece called "Mycologistical" for this year's Wearable Art Show. What we were trying to get across was where we live and the idea of mushrooms and the interconnectedness of mushrooms.

MK: To the organizations, how do you use art in your organizations now? I think of the obvious things like marketing and education. Any ideas beyond that?

Scientists and artists are really wired differently, we have different ways of looking at things. You really need to be in a room together, and somewhere in the middle, you become this perfect mix.

AM: For marketing, messaging is important. Messaging that can be really helpful is using imagery that moves people. From my perspective, imagery has to invite change. It has to make people look at things they're not quite comfortable looking at. Like what does a setting look like that's in peril? Or what does a setting look like where we're in a time of great change? These stories are hard and that's why people don't want to look at it, that's part of the eco-trauma. So, collaborating on imagery and messaging is a good place for us to work together.

RT: I totally agree. Photographs and paintings of the wilderness show the story to people who don't have an opportunity to go to look at these wonderful places. Quite often when we're walking through the woods, we're missing things that artists can capture for us.

Also, I'm a firm believer that people learn differently and art is a way some people learn things. That's why it really pains me when art programs are being cut from public schools because that's how some kids relate. And if we take that away we miss an opportunity.

We have a partnership this summer with Port Townsend School of the Arts for kids where we're going to be drawing and creating art around nature.

MK: That's a great example of a collaboration.

RT: I work with a lot of scientists, I'm not a scientist myself, and they drive me crazy sometimes.

If you don't have representation through a photograph or sculpture or a painting, a lot of people will miss the point. They won't get it. You can give them facts and figures. You can say temperature increase, sea level rising, but you show them what's at peril, you show them a picture of a forest that's in peril, that gets to them, and they'll learn.

MK: And I would also say not only the peril but the beauty.

LG: I'd like to expand upon artists and scientists getting together. I just listened into this great Freakanomics podcast – from the "How to Be Creative" series. They were talking about the personality of the science-minded person and all these studies they've done and… artists tend to go to jail more. We're the loud ones. The scientists' brains are really wired differently. Not one is better than the other, but we have different ways of looking at things. In order to go forth you have a science-based thing or it's doing art. You really need to be together. Not so much I am going to do your marketing or paintings or whatever but, be in a room together. Because we can shake loose some of that hypothesis lab brain out of you, and you can sort us out. And somewhere in the middle, you become this perfect mix.

MK: The sculptor Rebecca Welti said that scientists themselves told her … "we'll do the

science, but you do the art because you make it big and beautiful and then people are curious and then they want to learn about it."

LG: I think that we see things in different compartments, scientists can become more compartmental while an artist might say, woah I'm seeing the whole thing. So how can we bring these two ways of looking together to find a solution to a problem? It is about the brain power of it all… you can take these two sides and see things from the data side of it and then what do we do with that data?

MK: Art is more experiential. Well, they're both having experiences but maybe art can help the scientists make it experiential for others?

RT: Art can represent the crisis in a way the people will understand, more than a report. Some people can take a report and read it and understand it but other people need the visual, they need to touch and see something that represents the crisis, to understand the magnitude.

LG: And science is not always evocative.

LMcK: Science even strives not to be evocative. It strives to be unbiased. I took a class years ago with a wonderful woman named Kathleen Dean Moore, who's an artist, a beautiful writer, and she was saying science in and of itself cannot compel us towards change. You can put it all out there and say the climate is changing, this is why, these are the numbers. But we need normative presence, we need reason to care, we need evocative moments that help us integrate that information and do something with it.

I was raised with the ethos that you save what you love. You love what you know. Whether it's through books or photographs or sculpture or planting the garden or drawing pictures, if you don't have some sort of love for it, why would you save it?

MK: A question for the artists, how does appreciation and love inform your work? It is one of my hypotheses that we as visual artists are drawn to something because we fall in love with it. Then there is alchemy that happens through my own self, that becomes my vision, just because it's me. Because we are humans and we connect, that's what we do.

IE: it's those two different sides of the brain, the scientist and the artist that we generally perceive things from, and when you can find a balance between those two you can come up with a language that will make people open up. It can make something that's ugly cathartic; sometimes I try to do that in my work.

When you can find a balance between those two different sides of the brain – the scientist and the artist – you can come up with a language that will make people open up. It can make something that's ugly cathartic.

I worked with a Russian scientist, Nina Bednarsek, that I got connected to through Caroline Gibson from NW Straits Foundation. I was wanting to do this work on terrapods, one of the tiniest shelled organisms in the ocean, in the phytoplankton chain. They're like a snail with wings, and all these different beautiful shapes. They're the canary in the coal mine, so to speak, in the ocean. Nina was studying the deterioration of the shells up and down the west coast, and she sent me photographs of these little snail shells that were the typical spiral, which is such iconic imagery. So, I did a series of five in cast bronze that showed gradual deterioration, and for the last one I used a plastic baby doll to imprint a spiral of these faces going down a hole, like the spiral of the shell. The piece was called *Shell Game*, and the intent was to get people talking. And they might ask, why the faces, these look like skulls too. Because the ocean provides us with 25% of our protein, 75% of our oxygen. So that's the generations that are lost. Or that's our connection to it, if you want to put it that way. Even though it's beautiful and when you look inside that shell it's creepy and ugly, it's also cathartic.

MK: It's a good example of taking scientific fact and putting it into a visual metaphor.

IE: I think that collaboration with artists and ecologists and scientists is really beginning to be explored. And I would welcome opportunities to do it again myself.

MK: This last question is for the organizations: is there something that you see in the sphere you inhabit that visually excites you or interests you?

AM: Yes! I love it when the sturgeon come to town, that's really cool. Sturgeon follow the smelt in. Wherever smelt are moving – they're in Quilcene Bay, Dabob Bay, they can be all over. They're so unusual, so prehistoric.

We get incredible, beautiful visitors that I've seen, from the water's edge, from the dock. In the near shore, the kelps are like Butchart Gardens. There's so much texture, so much color, so much habitat.

We get incredible, beautiful visitors I've seen from the water's edge, from the dock. In the near shore, the kelps are like Butchart Gardens.

The king of the salmon are another fish that come in, that are only a deep water fish, so they get very confused when water temperatures in the ocean stratify. You know, it's not mixing, things are not working in their natural patterns, because of the extreme weathers that we're getting.

MK: What about you, Richard?

RT: For me, a special place is Tamanowas Rock in Chimacum. Through a partnership with the Land Trust and the tribes and other organizations, it was protected. The previous owner wanted to blow it up and put houses on it. But it is a sacred place and you go up there and it has this wonderful feel to it. I am very proud that the Land Trust and partners were able to protect that.

MK: Laurie?

LMcK: The word that came to my mind is emergence. One level of that is the physical beauty of seeds. Some seeds are really cute, little fluff balls. Physellia is called "bee's friend"… it's fantastic, I can tell you lots of great things about it. But the seeds are beautiful. They're little and they're tiny but they have all these little ridges in them.

In seeds there are colors, textures… it's magical, it's hopeful, it's resilient. Plants are tough, they want to live. They are the generations going forward.

In seeds there are colors, textures, there are field seeds that are just fabulous. And, every time in the spring, when you see the soil, before you even see the plant, when you see the soil break… they just come up and they just open up.

IE: The primal leaf, and a lot of them are heart shaped…

LMcK: It's magical, it's hopeful, it's resilient. It reminds you that life continues. And that's one of the things I love working with plants and farming. Plants are tough, they want to live. They are the generations going forward. •