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## Activating the New Alchemy and Mythologies for the Sustainability Age



## Book One – Thought Leader Interviews

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# Hearing the Light

Foreword by Willi Paul

## The Calling is my Journey

It's what we haven't discovered and shared that drives us on  
Mythic Voyageurs

## re: Contextualizing Joseph Campbell for the Sustainability Age

Are you a Shaman?  
Is Sustainability like a new religion?  
Save the planet or save the humans?

It's getting late. It's getting hot. Welcome to the flood zone

## Come on, you have to want to be initiated, right?

Write new myths, we can live them together  
Make sound, blend us into a new world

\* \* \* \* \*

## Openmythsources.com - Activating the New Alchemy and Mythologies for the Sustainability Age, Book One,

incorporates PlanetShifter.com Magazine and openmythsources.com vision and content for a living, evolving community of ideas by activating the new mythologies and alchemy. This synergy will produce a series of books and community events, integrating online and face-to-face tools, global values and ideas. We will fertilize and grow a rich cross-section of youth, adults and seniors by re-inventing and supporting the sustainability and mythic mandate.

The selected interviews are presented from earliest (4/09) to most recent (10/10) and do not marquee any so-called celebrities – all activists, artists and green business people in Book One the book are treated as equals. The original PlanetShifter.com Magazine URL's are listed with each interview so you can see the original and complete image, biographical and organizational information on each person. There are many more interviews at PlanetShifter.com Magazine than appear in this tome.

## Generally, the interviews weave one or more of the following subjects:

- Permaculture as a new system of community values
- Power of Sound to transform us
- The alchemy of both complex and simple acts
- Nature-based spirituality
- Synchronicity, metaphor and analogy
- Light & transmutations
- Alchemy of metaphors: bees and seeds, turtles
- "From LinkedIn.com to openmythsources! "
- Looking for corners, loving the edges

Book Two, due out in November 2010, will present Mr. Paul's New Myth Series and posts from both web sites. Book Three includes illustrations from Mr. Metcalfe and long fiction from Willi.

Let us know if you would like to collaborate on an interview for PlanetShifter.com Magazine.

Please upload your myths, songs, symbols and stories at openmythsources.com and discuss our visions!

**Contact Us:**

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## the open myth source initiation

*Introduction by David Metcalfe*

Coming into the 21st century we have countless pressures to adjust to: Manic self indulgence rampant in our corporate culture, tensions and violence from dissatisfied groups, irresponsible individuals, crumbling ideologies, and an environment that, whether due to human causes or not, is changing in ways that will be uncomfortable for the status quo within a very short time.

The suburban life that so many in the U.S. are used to is not a viable way of living. Unreasoned industry and the illusion of technological efficiency are eating away at local communities. Old, viable patterns of understanding the world are being unraveled faster than they can be replaced. In this unstable situation we must be capable of constant change and witness to uncountable revelations to overcome, endure and build into the future.

What's it take to get people motivated for change? William S. Burroughs once mentioned that he was working on creating a mythology for the space-age. His works were allegorical tales to help guide intrepid travelers into the new age of inner & outer space.

So what about the age of sustainability? Who will be the tale bearers for our struggle to maintain a viable ecology, sustainable social structures and more intelligent and ethical business models? Burroughs and his visions of Nova are wonderful for tearing down old infrastructures, but a time comes when we've got to start building again.

Our stories are sold by pimps and pushers of culture prepackaged and inert. Poets, writers, visual artists, and musicians are left to the stale memory of commerce, but when you speak to their friends, families and those that travel with them a different story emerges. Real lives appear through the foggy words of academic analysis; tears and laughter are shared beyond biographies. It is here that the [ open myth source ] project begins, in the raw roots of creativity, in the alchemy of the everyday.

One of the most rewarding things about our current communication platforms is the number of inspiring folks out there who are jumping in with no reservations and getting things done. The only way things are going to get better is if we all take a step sideways from our usual routine and start looking at things in a more profound way.

*"The enclosure of the commons by sociopathic corporate elites ensures conversion of inherent value into manufactured scarcity." – Chris Arkenberg, Institute for the Future*

This manufactured scarcity exists beyond the physical and extends into a scarcity of meaning. Our aesthetic value, and the power that it holds, is also being encircled. Orpheus played music seducing the gods themselves, the cathedrals and temples brought down the spirit of divinity for the masses to reflect on. What's that Pepsi logo doing for you? Had any moments of sublimity with that one?

Are we so lost in the wilds of consumerism that we can't hear the hollow drums of societal collapse pounding in our ears. Look at a Kurdish Sufi ritual. Is that music there to justify an opinion, news byte or marketing scheme? No, the beat of those drums reflects the movement of life, the dancers become one with the movement of constellations and society is held together by the shared breath of their heart sung prayers.

**Art and creativity used as a corporate brand device is actively manufacturing a scarcity of meaning in our society.**

For all the freedom these organizations claims to foster with their crippled charity, what they truly foster is a vacant hole where a real message could be housed. This isn't about hating corporations; this is about the responsibility of the creative class.

Disenchantment is a sociological idea that Max Weber worked with, the research of George Hansen has shown that in the development of our society this process of disenchantment reflects a deep seated movement towards stasis and the

death of meaning. This isn't just a matter of being "disenchanted" on a personal level, stop for a moment and realize how disenchanted the whole sloppy world has become. "What's the point of art or poetry?" we're asked almost daily by cheap newspapers run by dollar eyed manipulators. Magic my friend! The whole point is magic.

**Creative folks have been seduced into thinking that their output is simply to beautify a cheap marketing scheme.**

People talk about how beautiful the designs are in the caves of Lascaux. Those cave paintings weren't there to decorate the walls. The term caveman is a fictitious term, there were never any cavemen. Our ancestors weren't living in caves. The cave is a place of initiation. Go to any traditional culture and look for cave dwellers. If you find someone living in a cave it's going to be a shaman or a monastic.

Those cave paintings weren't the equivalent of cheap reproductions you pick up at IKEA to give the room some dubious class, those were painted to aid the hunt. This is the real hunt, for direct sustenance, sustenance not off put by capital where you re-buy your labor with interest so you can head to the 7-11 for some snacks and a coke.

While the creative class in the West is relegated to the socially acceptable version of designing tags for Heroin packets, we're teetering on the verge of a complete cultural transformation. Forget the BP spill, forget the burgeon tensions in the Middle East, the narco armies in Mexico, forget every drop of weaponized Uranium floating around on the black market, even our positive progress is reaching a point that some serious thinking is in order.

Our scientists and technicians are building things that require deep thought before we put them into play. The Singularity sounds stupid to every reasonably minded, well adapted, citizen. It sounds stupid because genius is not reasonable, nor well adapted, genius is the spark of change. We need new mythologies to bring us together, new songs, new stories, built on the beauty of the old traditions.

A key note speech at the World Future Society's annual convention in 2010 brought to light some of ethical and practical concerns that the Singularity raises. The ethical implications of smart drugs, Artificial Intelligence, surveillance, cybernetics, life extension technologies and all of the other developments that define the Singularity movement need to be better understood. The surprising political ramifications that came out of the development of nuclear weapons shows us that this kind of technological advance is best accompanied by serious thought.

**In a situation like this why are our creative thinkers being wasted on designing websites for businesses?**

There are too many stale ideas, old habits, prudish strategies being passed around as gospel in a time when the opportunities opened up by communications technology makes a much richer experience possible. You get some crippled thinker at the top espousing ideas on making fast cash and pretty soon there's another cell phone vendor moving in where the bookstore used to be.

The [ open myth source ] project is an open call to all who can hear it to guide our limping society back into shape before the whole thing blows up in our face. We need some cave paintings for the hunt, our hunters are ill equipped and someone's been fattening them with potato chips.

## **Aaron Lehmner, Bay Localize Leader**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/350>

### **With so much economic trouble in this country and world, how is Bay Localize doing on the financial front? Any advice to other groups?**

Ironically, Bay Localize is actually doing quite despite the horrific landscape of the national and global economy. A growing number of funders are stepping up to the plate to support our work -- which we think is an indication that economic localization and regional self-reliance are finally being taken seriously as viable solutions to our energy, climate, and economic crises. So I would advise other groups working in this arena to begin framing their work as a strategy that can address these interwoven challenges simultaneously.

### **What are your top three concerns?**

Sustainability, social justice, and economic vitality. In recent decades we've become an increasingly globalized society, and along the way, we've sacrificed environmental health and community well-being for the sake of convenience and efficiency. Despite growing public awareness, our use of fossil fuels continues to rise — and as a consequence, our global climate is becoming increasingly unstable and potentially lethal. What's more, we are now dangerously dependent on far-flung regions to supply us with fossil fuels to produce our manufactured goods, grow our food, and power our vehicles and buildings. A growing chorus of reputable energy analysts and geologists are now warning that our demand for fossil energy will soon outstrip supply.

To help prepare our region for the coming end of cheap oil — and the progressive decline in long-distance imports that will follow — we are developing flexible tools and models that area groups and municipal governments can implement in their own locales to bring the production of food, energy, and essential goods and services closer to home.

All Bay Area residents are affected by our over-reliance on fossil fuels. But our region's poor are particularly exposed to the consequences of global warming and fossil fuel dependence. Many face increasing difficulty making ends meet and getting from here to there as energy costs rise. By being consigned mostly to low-lying areas, the poor are also the most vulnerable to flooding from sea level rise due to climate change. By advocating for policies and projects that build a regionally-focused economy, we believe we can help increase the livability of all Bay Area counties. And by shifting our energy use to renewables – thereby slashing fossil fuel burning for electricity and transportation – we believe we can improve the quality of life for low-income communities and people of color who suffer disproportionately from exposure to pollutants from nearby gas-fired power plants, petroleum refineries, and congested freeways.

### **What does "localize" mean? Localize from what to what?**

Economic localization is the process by which a region, county, city, or even neighborhood frees itself from an overdependence on the global economy to a more self-reliant economy that invests in its own resources to provide for its needs. Most importantly, a more localized economy produces a significant portion of the goods, services, food, and energy it consumes from its own local endowment of financial, natural, and human capital. Economic localization brings production of goods and services closer to their point of consumption, reducing the need to rely on long supply chains and distant markets so that communities and regions can, for the most part, provision themselves. While it is certainly not possible to produce every kind of good and service locally, economic localization seeks to restore an efficient balance between local production and imports that reduces local economic vulnerability and minimizes the negative social and environmental externalities of inefficient trade.

### **Are you suggesting a major paradigm shift in values for the USA? If so, please describe this shift.**

In some ways, aspiring to be thrifty, self-reliant, and conservative in one's use of resources are quintessentially American traits that have a time-honored tradition in our nation's history. It was only in the post-World War II period that these values were almost thoroughly cast aside in favor of a kind of live-for-today, me-first consumerism.

That said, we've strayed so far from being a self-reliant and sustainable economy – especially since the early 1970s when the US peaked in its own domestic oil production – that economic localization now amounts to a radical paradigm shift in our thinking. You can see in the debates that are going on nationally and internationally about "resuscitating" our collapsing economy that the only thinkable strategy is "stimulating" our economy in order to get the global consumer growth-fest back on track. No one in high office within the major industrialized economies is talking about learning to live sustainably or equitably in a steady-state or even a contracting economy -- much less in one that relies less and less on the shipping of fossil fuel-based good half-way across the globe. But that's the kind of shift we must begin to accept, prepare for, and shape to our own regional conditions if we ever hope to thrive within the post-petroleum economy that's coming.

### **Is the "pending collapse" of the fossil fuel economy the main driver at Bay Localize?**

It's certainly one of the main drivers. Our growing dependence on declining fossil fuels coupled with mounting climate instability are converging to a crisis stage that imperils the long-term viability of the Bay Area's economy, infrastructure, and natural environment. Fundamentally, we believe that vibrant local economies and healthy communities are the best guard against global insecurity, an essential part of achieving social equity, and a vital way to enrich our day-to-day lives. Localization can also decrease global greenhouse gas emissions by cutting the need for imports, and increase regional vitality by encouraging the recirculation of dollars within the local economy.

### **Do you see a unity of purpose and energy in the East Bay now, perhaps centered at the 14th Street building?**

There's certainly a lot of synergy among the many incredible organizations within our building: Urban Habitat, ICLEI, and the Institute for Social and Environmental Justice Education. Very nearby, we're also in close working relationship with Communities for a Better Environment and TransForm (formerly the Transportation and Land Use Coalition). We're working together on a number of fronts, and definitely see a convergence of purpose emerging.

### **How do you personally live the green life?**

I have a long way to go -- I still drive too often, eat too many processed foods, and take too many flights. But I keep a front-yard garden, commute daily by transit, stick to a vegetarian diet, recycle, compost, and take reusable bags and containers with me wherever I go.

### **What are the goals of the Rooftop Resources Project? What resources have you put into this effort? Who are your partners?**

The goal of the Rooftop Resources Project is to demonstrate how cities can become more sustainable and less dependent on faraway power plants or industrial farms by using our urban rooftops to work for us producing fresh vegetables, catching rainwater, and reaping clean energy. Whereas most rooftops are unused space, we see incredible opportunity for these spaces to hold hydroponic gardens, plant communities, solar panels, and rainwater catchment systems. Such systems are popular solutions around the world — yet their viability is relatively unknown here in the US. We have been working with urban planners, structural engineers, and community groups to explore their many benefits and assess barriers to their development.

In a study we recently released called "Tapping the Potential of Urban Rooftops," we found that hydroponic and intensive gardens planted on suitable buildings within the Eastlake neighborhood of Oakland could produce 124 metric tons of vegetables per year. This would meet the USDA's annual recommended produce needs of 8,500 residents! Rooftop gardens also help meet environmental objectives like greater energy efficiency, cleaner air, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, as well as yield social benefits like stronger community bonds and green-collar jobs.

For those exploring their own rooftop systems, Bay Localize just released the Use Your Roof Guidebook: Resources and Considerations for Rainwater Catchment, Living Roofs and Solar Power. The booklet draws from the groundbreaking research of Tapping the Potential of Urban Rooftops, as well as other research findings from the field, and offers guidelines for selecting an appropriate rooftop system and embarking on the design and implementation process.

Among our key partners, Bay Localize worked closely with Oakland Food Connection to develop a vegetable garden program at the EC Reems Academy of Technology and Art in east Oakland. The EC Reems principal and faculty wanted this kind of program for their school, but lacked the ground capacity for a garden. The kids helped to build out the garden and have learned powerful lessons about healthy, fresh food. Oakland Food Connection has taken the lead in documenting the project so that other schools can adapt the model to their own needs.

More recently, Bay Localize has partnered with Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco on a project called Graze the Roof! Spearheaded by our former intern Maya Donelson, the program engages inner city youth and adults in sustainable, low cost rooftop food production from seed through harvest and works to eliminate inequalities and greenhouse gas emissions in our food system by encouraging people to become more self-sufficient and make healthier food choices for themselves and for the planet.

### **Are the oil companies helping your cause?**

For some reason, they haven't been the most enthusiastic supporters of our efforts. :) One of our Steering Committee members, Nile Malloy, works for Communities for a Better Environment, which has been fighting Chevron over its plans to expand a major oil refinery in the City of Richmond. Such an expansion would place a greater environmental burden on a community that has fought hard for years to reduce pollution-related health risks, consumption of fossil fuels, and the effects of climate change.

Chevron's Richmond refinery is the largest in Northern California and provides about 25 percent of all the region's gasoline. The new equipment will allow it to process heavier crude and about 1,000 more barrels of gasoline a day. A 2007 report issued by Contra Costa County Health Services shows that Richmond has significantly higher rates of cancer and asthma hospitalizations than any other city in the county due to many polluting facilities in the region, including Chevron. Needless to say, we'd like to see our economy eliminate the "need" for such sacrifice zones by curtailing our need for fossil fuels in the first place -- something that the oil industry is fighting tooth-and-nail to prevent.

### **Tell us about the Community Resilience Toolkit pilot?**

As part of our Bay Area 2020 program, our Community Resilience Toolkit is designed to help communities assess their vulnerability to energy shocks, the climate crisis, and other emergencies, while setting goals to make their communities more stable and resilient and organizing community members around specific objectives. So far, we've piloted the Toolkit with the Social Equity Caucus and are in discussions about piloting it in partnership with Movement Generation. We plan to expand these activities in 2009-2010 with Toolkit trainings and other workshops for localization activists. Our Toolkit is set for re-release this summer, and will contain a set of modular resources for those interested in focusing on food, water, energy, transportation, or local economic development.

### **Bay Localize**

[www.baylocalize.org/](http://www.baylocalize.org/)

## **Simon Haiduk, Painter**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/916>

### **What are the tools of your craft?**

For painting I generally use oils and acrylics on canvas, and digital paint on my computer. The digital painting comes from using a Wacom tablet with an interactive painting program like Corel Painter, or Photoshop. For some of my other digital work, like graphic design and motion graphics, I combine the use of Photoshop, Illustrator, and After Effects on my computer. After Effects is an amazing tool for creating easy motion and animation.

### **Explain what you mean by "creative jamming."**

It's like a brainstorming session but more with pictures than words. It could also be a collaborative session on a single painting while multiple people paint on the same canvas at the same time or in succession. I suppose there is a cornucopia of possible explanations of that phrase "creative jamming", so I'll leave the rest for you to ponder upon.

### **Are you spiritual? Religious? Political? How do these agendas play together and support a green life?**

I would say that I am spiritual. I do follow some politics but that game makes me sick and confused so I usually avoid too much concentration on it. My spirituality comes through in my artwork as an expression of how I feel a connection to a universal source of energy that flows through all life. I generally feel it as a vibrational frequency of light that comes in visual and sonic channels through my being, and into whatever I'm creating. I feel this supports a green life because the more I become aware of that energy the more apparent I can see how my actions and non-action, affect everything else. Sometimes this awareness feels heavy, but it's usually a simple shift in perspective to make it feel light, as a knowing of the unfolding.

### **Tell us your three favorite bands and three favorite modern artists? How do music and art combine to make a transcendent experience?**

Off hand, I guess three of my favorite bands are: Tool, Sigir Ros and Isis. Three visual artists would be: Robert Venosa, Alex Grey, and Andrew Jones. I find that music and art combine in many ways to make a transcendent experience, be it listening to music while creating, or literally combining the two at live events or as a music video. I often paint as though I'm painting music notes but in a way other than traditional music notation. It's more as a flow of energy that comes out as abstract or symbolic energy in color and form.

### **Caduceus conjures up a mythical land in me, but also deep science, DNA. Tell us what propelled this work to light?**

You hit a good point on a reference to a mythical land and DNA.

This painting comes from nurturing the availability of naturally abundant energy in our world and its surrounding universe. I have been on a continual path of healing in spirit while also re-connecting to nature, and this painting represents a little of all. Even more specific, is that at the time the initial under-painting was being created, my girlfriend and her dad were both ill. While painting I was meditating on channeling this naturally abundant healing energy and fusing it into the art as a message to send out to them and the world; (green being the choice color of this vibration, and hence the title "Caduceus" in reference to the medicinal symbol). In reference to DNA you can see the spiraling energy, (shape of DNA), and the frequency of the piece also comes from a knowing that inside our DNA lies dormant an energy just waiting to be tapped, and will transform us into new beings that can live on light energy in the same way that solar panels do... or something like that.

It is also reminiscent of a mythical land, or rather a real land that exists somewhere betwixt ours and another. Some people have told me that the textures and energy remind them very specifically of ayahuasca visions they've had. I haven't done ayahuasca but, I see understand what they are saying, because of other plant visions I've had.

**Fire Orb is fantastic! Thank you for uploading it:**

**Fire Orb** (<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/856>). What is this based on?

Thanks! That one is from a "creative jam session" I had with a friend who is in the concept stages of creating a role playing game called OrbWorld. He invited some artistic friends over to see what we could come up with on the spot while he read out some of his concepts. The fire orb is just that. A fire orb. Well to be more precise a fire Orbling, representing one aspect of the archetype that is the element of fire in Orb World.

As you can see it has some definite flavor of my other work, in that it resonates a frequency of light and sound that comes for the same universal source as my other art.

**You spoke about "intention" in our phone conversation. You seem to say that PlanetShifter.com has the right intention that you seek in a community. Talk about this internal guide. How did this develop? Has it mis-lead you in the past?**

Well I see that Planet Shifter is aimed at bringing awareness to people through arts and media about environmental sustainability among other related issues, and that's what I'm into also. This type of intention developed in me starting at a young age because my parents were always into such issues. In fact my mom was part of the initiators one of the first main grass roots environmental organizations in the Kootenays, at the time called EKES, now Wildsight. My parents have been guides towards living a healthy lifestyle of mind and body in connection to nature. We took part in many activities outdoors, with groups, friends and just our family. So this helped foster that aspect of me which has continued today, through my own discoveries as well. At this point I feel need to continue bringing about a deeper awareness of social customs that are damaging to our environment and our spirit. Thus triggering a response to become more consciously activated people living in a peaceful world. My internal guide speaks to me when I see or feel that something is a craving to me, and I must question that craving. Where does it come from? Is it culturally programmed or is it a real necessity? Often it is not a necessity, thus taking part in it only adds to the pool of craving and consumption which leads to more planetary suffering.

I don't think my intuition on this has ever mis-lead me in the past. I would say that my ego mind certainly has, but it is all part of the flow of realized awareness so I accept it as is. I want to point out here that many of the concepts I share, may make me sound like I should be perfect and adhere to them at all times, but I don't. I'm learning in the same world as everyone else, and integrating my own journey as part of the collective, sharing my experience with whomever wants sharing. Planet Shifter is one of those nodes of sharing to help each other in this journey, so here we are...

**What other web groups do you visit regularly? What does each offer you?**

I usually take part in forums on the **Pod Collective** (<http://podcollective.com>). It is a great art community with many like-minded, and kindred spirits and offer critiques on art, and guidance on many issues relative to our earthly existence. From spirit, to art, events, humor, sustainability, environmental issues, and more. It offers me a chance to connect with kin in activated dialogues that cannot take place otherwise due to our distant locations. Other groups might include ones on networks like Tribe.net, and Facebook. Each has their own specifics, and most often it is to inform on current events, be it world news or gatherings of creative inspiration.

**Are you consciously creating new symbols - fresh icons - never mapped or seeded before? Please share some examples in your art of how you created and utilized symbols.**

I don't know if I'm creating 'new' symbols, or fresh icons, never mapped before. I do feel that I'm part of an evolving consciousness that is unfolding and showing itself through certain archetypes in visual and sonic media. Though to say they have never been mapped before could be an overstatement. I think the media and tools we are using now, are offering a new type of reflection of an energy that has always been present and manifest throughout human history.

The symbols we are playing with now seem to play a role in connecting those people whose paths fit in a certain way for the benefit of our own unfolding, while sharing this story with those who partake in the interaction of viewing. I suppose one piece I could reference with obvious symbols, would be one I did back in the fall of 2004, during the first year of my

new found appreciation for painting, and connections to my visionary kin. This is the painting **Synergenesis** (<http://simonhaiduk.com/shop/2004/synergenesis.html>). It was created then from the inspiration of an event taking place in San Francisco called "Synergenesis", which was aimed at connecting visionary artists and interested viewers, in the exploration of uncovering a world not yet fully manifest, though showing itself through this type of art and media. I couldn't make it to the event, so I stayed home and tapped into that energy and created this piece which has reference to many different symbols, including ones from my dreams, and even representing styles of other artists merging as one. Instead of explaining more, I'll let each viewer muse on what they find symbolic to them. Another piece which comes to mind, is **My Awakening** (<http://simonhaiduk.com/shop/2004/my-awakening.html>). This was the second painting I ever made of this type, in the winter of 2004. I was recently reminded of it, because of a near death experience story I just read, in which the person describes their experience in close detail related to a cosmic transfiguration I experienced, that lead to the expression of this painting.

Specifically the high frequency energy, the tunnel with a bright light at the end, a universal grid matrix that connects all life, and eyes as portals into other worlds or dimensions. There was even further detail that was similar, but too much to go into here. The point being that, including people who have done ayahuasca, this piece reflects a real place where others have been, that came out as symbols they can identify with. You can also see some swirling swastikas representative of that endless flowing energy that is identified as a timeless symbol used throughout human history in a positive connotation (minus the Nazis). I suppose you could extrapolate symbols and mythology from much of my art, so feel free to play this game as you gaze through each active portal of imagination.

### **Are you helping to build the mythology of sustainability? Why or why not?**

I feel that in my many ways I am helping build this mythology or whatever you want to call it. In the past year I focused much on creating tree and forest imagery that was a bridge between the high frequency ethereal energies of past paintings, mixed with a strong connection to Earth or Gaian groundedness. This is part of my own process in reconnecting to the earth, while sharing it so others can see as well. I use 100% recycled PCP paper for my small prints, and try to take other steps in creating art, and a lifestyle that are more harmonious with the earth and her shared inhabitants. This includes eating as much local and organic produce as I can, and in general stepping out of the mass consumption paradigm of useless junk, into a new holistic one that is more sustainable for all life. I do this because it resonates with an evolving consciousness that I feel to be a part of.

### **Please explain how you use "sustainable ways of producing work that maintain balance and harmony between the Earth and her shared inhabitants."**

Using digital media and painting has allowed me to experiment more without going through multiple containers of toxic chemicals involved with physical paint. As mentioned above, I try and make some of my products for sale in a more sustainable way. Other than that, specifically on a production level, I feel like I'm lacking and that I'm aiming at discovering new ways to express art, that are less toxic. I've recently been inspired, and have been conjuring ideas for visionary landscaping and gardening. Creating functional art that is "sustainable" is where I see myself headed. In the past two years my partner and I have been growing more of our own food, while also gathering locally abundant herbs and produce that grow in the wild.

All aspects of life can become a creation as part of this unfolding in awareness and sustainability. When I look at "the big picture" nothing is truly sustainable and all is in constant flux, though I feel we can have more compassion for the environment we share with other life forms and ourselves. This includes our thoughts and emotions and how we project, or not project a certain reality to the world around us. We've grown up in a cage of consumption and addiction on so many levels, and I feel more of us are waking up to see through that while stepping into a more peaceful place of existence.

**Peace to all, Simon**

[simonhaiduk.com](http://simonhaiduk.com)

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## Dréa Drury, Sonic Alchemist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1165>

*Interview with Dréa Drury And I do believe it's true  
That there are roads left in both of our shoes  
But if the silence takes you  
Then I hope it takes me too  
So brown eyes I hold you near  
Cause you're the only song I want to hear  
A melody softly soaring through my atmosphere*

Where soul meets body  
DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

### **Robyn Hitchcock told me that music is a form of alchemy – perhaps an invisible attempt to alter people's moods. Your reactions?**

The enormity of this topic is somewhat overwhelming! This awareness, that music is a form of alchemy, is something that is the driving force behind how I approach my art. I most definitely agree with Robyn Hitchcock that the process of experiencing music is a form of alchemy. Music and sound can quite literally transform not only inner psychological states, but physical states as well. We have all felt, at some point in our lives, an instant where music has pierced even the most deep and guarded place within us. The result of this may take the form of ecstatic laughter, extreme discomfort, or uncontrollable tears. It is at this instant that musical alchemy happens. The sound enters our being, and through a series of vibratory changes and reactions, a deep emotional hurt or pressure (lead) is transformed into tears of joy (gold). And this is where it gets interesting because, even though Robyn sees music as an "attempt" to alter people's moods, there are musical traditions (such as Indian classical music) which have been specifically designed for this very purpose! This is where music, mathematics, and science meet - and it is my personal opinion that if more musicians were encouraged to explore these dimensions, the world would be quite a different place.

### **Do you write music based on your dreams?**

It's interesting because sometimes my dreams will teach me what I am musically capable of doing. After having a dream like this, when I go to sing or compose, I find that my skills or my techniques have changed somehow. There are also times when I will base a melodic idea or entire song on a particular archetype that shows up in my dream, it's a way for me to integrate this energy into myself after experiencing it in the dream life.

### **Hero. Define yours? Are you a hero?**

My idea of a hero is someone whose actions are not based on following what is necessarily expected of them by friends/family/society and even themselves, but based on listening to an inner voice that is greater than their own idle chatter. I think that a hero can seem like a selfish person on the outside, but the truth is quite the opposite, because they allow themselves to be moved by the divine. A true hero sacrifices the parts of themselves that betray their intuition. A friend of mine calls this being a "human robot." You would think that this has negative connotations but it doesn't, it simply means that you hear the commands of your authentic self and you DO. No questioning, only trust. Am I a hero? On the best of days I think that I am. And on the worst, my robot self is still tinkering with ways to get rid of the old programming.

### **What are the sounds from pre-history? Do you sample nature?**

The sounds from pre-history are all sounds from nature, bird calls, wind in the alpine, waves crashing, silence. There are also the "unheard" sounds, those which are underlying everything but have been tuned out. People who have done prolonged periods of meditation, are clairaudient, or those who are intimate with entheogenic ritual have all heard these sounds. And yes, I would have to say that my relationship with sound is mirrored by my relationship with nature.

Listening to bird calls has taught me more about melody than I learned while I was studying music in college.

**You stated: "The more that we realize that we are the world, and that the world is us, the more we realize the magnitude of importance that the "green" movement has." Is the era of sustainability the end of a world? What's next?**

Yes, the era of sustainability will mark the end of a world that is controlled by the paradigm of scarcity and unnecessary over-consumption. What's next? When I figure that out, I'll let you know.

**"Art, music, and the written/spoken word are the most potent catalysts for change." This is true for the main stream? What are we really listening to Drea? And what effects does commercial music and television have on our well-being?**

This is also true for the mainstream, but the effects are somewhat horrifying in my opinion. Mainstream music, at its worst, is a kind of sonic sleep medication that reaffirms our apathy, pettiness, and ignorance. The effects of commercial media on our well-being are enormous, especially for youth. We're getting all of these mixed messages that don't line up when you put them all together. This is why I am thankful for artists like Tool who aren't afraid to stand up and express what our dreaming selves need to hear

**"As a musician, my goal is to create a kind of sonic medicine that will help to propel the listener into a different state of being - one that is perhaps more conducive to having dialogue with the authentic self." What is the authentic self?**

The "authentic self" would be the part of us that isn't influenced by external situations, past conditioning, future projections - and at the same time, is unmoved by inner situations, like emotional turmoil or even profound bliss. It is the self that resides within the eye of the storm, untouched by aversion or want. It is the part of ourselves that wouldn't think twice about jumping into a fire to save a child, or offering our last piece of food to a sick person instead of keeping it for ourselves. Ultimately, it is the part of ourselves that sees that every action we make has a domino effect. There is no action that we can make that doesn't affect something/someone else in the universe.

**Fascinated with the potentials of sound from an early age, most of Dréa's inspirations and teachings come from experiences she had growing up in a remote area of British Columbia. Silence and the music of nature have nurtured Dréa's intimate understanding of sound since birth. She believes that everything about sound and music can be learned from the observation of Gaia, and can be accessed if one listens carefully enough in a receptive state of silence. What is Gaia? Do we see / hear this force in the slums of East Oakland?**

When I used the word "Gaia" here, I was using it as another word for "mother nature", "earth", or the "great spirit". It's interesting that you should bring up Oakland because when I was living in the Bay area, I would often have times when I would experience this energy, even though there were all kinds of crazy things going on around me. However, I realize that it is much more difficult to tap into this in certain areas, especially cities. But truly, when we're in a situation like that (where there is no escape from noise), it makes some people tap into that source within themselves even more.

**After studying composition at a traditional college, while recording and performing original material, Dréa's intrigue of music led her to study esoteric applications of sound. While living in San Francisco, she completed a certificate in Psychoacoustics (the effects of music and sound on the human nervous system). Is acutonics music? What is Tao? How does Sound Yoga work with the mind body spirit triad?**

Acutonics is not generally referred to as music, but instead a kind of sound therapy which uses musical intervals to direct/manipulate energy within the body through the precise placement of tuning forks on the meridians. In this way, it is similar to music in that it uses musical intervals (thirds, fifths, and so on), and is based on what some people call "the music of the spheres." I would say that "Tao" is the creator and sustainer of the universe. It literally translates as "way" or "path", and in Taoism, it is a model of conduct usually linked with nondoing and emptiness. And before I go on I'll stop there. The Tao cannot be talked about or explained with words, and I'll feel silly if I try.

Sound Yoga is a fascinating practice, one that (in my opinion) I have only waded into ankle deep. To cohesively speak of

it would mean that I am fluent in all that it is, and I am not.

**Dréa's main focus is to create a space where people can easily transcend conventional perceptions of their internal/external worlds, therefore facilitating a remembrance of archetypal sound. What is this "space?" Does it always exist whether we are connected to it or not?**

This space that I speak of is a kind of spaciousness that all great music creates, a space where the chatter in our heads finally ceases to exist. And yes, this space always exists within us, it's just a matter of tapping into it through sound, meditation, yoga, dance, ritual, or whatever way works for you.

**"Everything in our known universe is composed of vibration. If we take into consideration that our own bodies, physical and otherwise, are also vibration, we will understand the realities at play when we experience sound. We can begin to understand that, when we hear a single note, we are not only "hearing" the note, but physically and energetically "transforming" into the sound itself through the principles of resonance and entrainment. It was the shaman or medicine man who first used music and sound to create change in physical and non-physical matter, whether it was a human body or the weather. How are you a Shaman? Is this a title that you apply to yourself or one that others have given you?**

Personally, I have never referred to myself as a shaman or healer, as I don't like to label myself because it can lead to expectations. Although, there are a few people who have received sound treatments from me or who have listened to me perform who have called me this. In a sense, I do feel that I take on the role of a shaman when I do a treatment for someone - and especially when I perform live. When I was younger, I had absolutely no control over the "trance" state that I would enter, and would literally almost black out during a performance. Words and sounds would come out of me that were entirely out of my control. Now, I am able to stay more grounded, but still allow myself to enter into the dreamtime while singing. I think that any performer who moves people with music can be considered a Shaman. For example, when I go to a metal concert (of which I am a huge fan), I am continuously amazed by the level of ritual involved. It's like a modern day exorcism. After the concert, there is a noticeable change in energy, it's lighter somehow.

**"In the realm of psychoacoustics, the terms music, sound, frequency, and vibration are essentially interchangeable, because they are different approximations of the same essence." What is this essence? How does this force heal?**

This "essence" is what some people would call "energy", though I think that this word is greatly overused these days. This essence has the \*potential\* to heal because we are vibratory beings. There is nothing static about our existence. Many people have a hard time understanding modalities like acupuncture or sound healing because they are stuck in the realm of the physical. We are so closed off and separated from what is happening "under the surface", that we think that what we see with our eyes is the ultimate reality. To understand this "essence", this "vibratory state", one has to have an experiential relationship with it. This means being dedicated to a practice that allows you to become more in tune with this state, through meditation, breath work, dance, sacred medicines, etc. Until then, anything that I say here is just nonsense.

**I enjoyed your piece called "Involution." Please define and give examples of the following terms: ambient sound, new age music, progressive rock.**

Ambient sound is more about atmosphere than musical composition and structure (although, the two can be merged). It is usually spacious and relaxing, and I like to think of ambient music as sonic "portals" that help you to access different states of consciousness. An example of this is "Passing Dream" by Bill Laswell. New Age Music is something that I don't really associate with, and think that it is a slightly vague and outdated music classification. I mean, some people will call Yanni new age, and then others will say Enya. Sorry, it's beyond me. Progressive rock originally emerged in the late 60's and was initially an attempt to push out of the verse-chorus-verse hole that most music was in. Bands like Yes, King Crimson, and Pink Floyd all helped rock to evolve in this way, by fusing elements of jazz, classical, and even world influences. Prog rock pushes technical and compositional boundaries, and I would have to say that Tool is definitely my favorite band in this category. Their album "Lateralus" remains unparalleled, both lyrically and musically.

**"Nagdeo" is a very interesting work with images art by Simon Haiduk. A splash light trance dance song. What is the message?**

It doesn't have one specific message, I think that we would rather have people decipher a meaning for themselves. Although, I definitely wrote the music with a specific purpose in mind - that being: to activate and awaken the listener. I think Simon would say the same about the visuals.

**Dréa Drury**

<http://www.zoeticsound.com/>

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**Hitchcock Interview by Willi Paul**

<http://www.willipaul.com/rockmyth/HitchcockInterview.zip>

## **Oriana Sarac and Kaytea Petro, Neighborhood Fruit**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1203>

### **Is NF trademarked? Can you give us an idea of how much it took to start this up?**

Neighborhood Fruit is an LLC registered in the State of California. It took about six months to develop the idea for Neighborhood Fruit, and about six months to build what we have so far (although, we have many exciting surprises planned for the next few months!).

Neighborhood Fruit developed out of a master's project at Presidio School of Management (<http://www.presidiomba.org/>). The company name, branding and identity all emerged from an extensive survey and feedback process.

### **Have you spawned any additional businesses, like jam makers?**

During our period of research, we identified jam and pie makers and other low-cost startups as potential growth customers. Since we have only been launched for about 20 days, it is unclear whether these groups are utilizing Neighborhood Fruit.

Neighborhood Fruit was created to make use of the abundant resources already available in our local neighborhoods and to promote greater urban self-reliance. By creating a portal where neighbors can find and share their backyard abundance as well as find trees on public lands, we believe that people will be able to eat better and live in better communities.

### **How big do you want this to get?**

Neighborhood Fruit intends to become a primary nationwide resource for urban food solutions, as well as working to mitigate climate change and contributing to the creation of a socially just society. Toward these goals, we will expand to include vegetables and herbs during 2009. We estimate that there is between 40-200,000,000 pounds of available backyard fruit in America's cities, a significant portion of which goes to waste every year. If all this fruit was consumed, that would mean a reduction an annual reduction of 3 million pounds in atmospheric carbon released and 237 million gallons of water over the same amount of fruit grown in orchards.

### **Please elaborate on the underlying values here, start with "trusty fulfillment."**

We believe that the reason why people haven't been sharing fruit within their communities recently is that the trust is missing. We specifically created Neighborhood Fruit's Fruitfillment service (a few features are still in development) to facilitate trust between users. We also feel that by branding the site in a fun way, we enable people to open up and trust.

### **How long with the beta last?**

Neighborhood Fruit will remain in Beta for as long as it takes to complete and smooth out the features to make the service work, as well as recruit a critical mass of users. At a minimum, we will be in Beta until August.

### **Not sure if I saw any reference to organic versus not? Help!?**

Organic certification is an expensive and multiple-year process designed to help farmers distinguish their produce on the commercial market; it is so expensive that many small scale farmers cannot afford it. Neighborhood Fruit is a place where people can share their excess produce with members of the community. As such, we don't expect them to have gone through the organic certification process, but we do encourage sustainable gardening practices through our newsletter and Gardening forum.

**Do you see your model morphing into other green businesses?**

We envision that five years down the road, Neighborhood Fruit will have spawned several additional corollary ventures (both for-profit and non-profit) in the area of sustainable food, food advocacy, edible urban forests etc.

**Is your seeker / grower process too complex? Do you have stats to share?**

Since we have only been functioning for about two weeks, it is unclear if/how the service needs to be optimized.

**Share 3 things that you learned at PSM and applied to NF. Thanks!**

Presidio School of Management was a great place to initially develop Neighborhood Fruit, the company was built on the strong foundation provided by the education at Presidio. First of all, Neighborhood Fruit is a systemic solution; it addresses many problems - urban food access, food security, waste, carbon food mile - in one simple solution. Second, Neighborhood Fruit is rigorous measuring and tracking metrics, both sustainability and fiscally. We believe that this is the key to creating a credible and accountable company, and solution. Finally, by establishing partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders, we can amplify our, and our partner's impact. The result of this will hopefully be a healthier, more sustainable world.

**Forage Oakland, a partner, is working on a neighborhood sustainability level. Can you share some nuts and bolts on this relationship?**

Forage Oakland's Asiya Wayud has been collaborating with Neighborhood Fruit since before the company was formed. We have mutually advised and supported one another in our distinct realms: Forage Oakland (hyper-local, art-as-life project), Neighborhood Fruit (nationwide, for-profit-venture).

**neighborhoodfruit.com**

<http://neighborhoodfruit.com/>

## **Diana Leaf Christian, Community Builder**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1213>

### **We have so many problems associated with families these days, how do you both heal and build communities with total strangers?**

If you mean, "Do intentional communities heal problems associated with families?" No. Intentional communities are not usually set up as therapeutic places for people with problems in their families.

And, people don't usually start communities with total strangers. Community founders must get to know each other well in the process of starting a successful new community. And in terms of how one starts a successful new community, it usually involves a group knowing the general location where they want to start a community and whether they want it to be urban or rural; having shared values and creating a common mission & purpose; choosing and learning to use a fair, participatory decision-making process (and if it's consensus, getting trained in it before using it, and requiring incoming group members to get trained before granting them the right to block a proposal); creating a system of community self-governance, including whole-group meetings and committees; making good communication skills a priority early in the group's life (including having a conflict resolution method in place before there's much conflict); creating a membership policy (including for the forming group, and for when people live on the property); creating a list of site criteria; finding and financing property (including dealing with zoning issues if necessary); developing or renovating the property; then living on the property together with all these policies in place, and . . . enjoying community life!

### **What are the key traits that individuals need to bring to intentional community building?**

Vision (the willingness to see and believe in something that doesn't exist yet), confidence, an entrepreneurial spirit (experience in successfully taking risks), willingness to listen to others and make decisions cooperatively, people skills, organizational skills, financial skills, and time to work in work parties, attend community meetings, work on committees, and share meals and have fun together.

### **What you propose has to be very expensive, right?**

It can be expensive to start a new community if you buy land and develop or renovate property, in that it can often cost about as much per person as it does to buy a house in the same area. And not, it's not expensive if you create community by all renting a place together.

In terms of joining a community, most communities have a membership fee or buy-in fee, etc., which helps reimburse the founders for the cost of buying and developing or renovating the property and servicing the property-purchase debt. If you join an income-sharing community, there's no joining fee, and Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri, an independent-income community ("independent income" means it's not income-sharing), has no joining fee either.

### **What is meant by a "communitarian path?"**

If you are asking, "How do people who live in intentional communities differ from people who live in mainstream culture?", I'd say they tend to become more willing to listen to others and make decisions cooperatively, more aware of how their actions may affect others (since in community everyone is "downstream" of everyone else), and more conscious and self-aware -- particularly about their own unique faults and virtues.

### **What is the state-of-the-art with alternative currency? What are some success stories?**

Intentional communities which successfully use alternative currencies include Findhorn in Scotland, which uses the EKO; Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina, where I live, which uses the Leap (both paper currencies), and Damanhur in Italy, which uses the Credito (a silver coin designed and minted onsite). At Findhorn, for example, a local credit union created by a group of Findhorn Association members, Ekopia Resource Exchange, issues the EKO as its local currency. (Ekopia

Resource Exchange has 200 members and approximately \$1,200,000.00 in investment capital.) EKO's can be used interchangeably with British Pounds Sterling and Euros to buy goods and services from other Findhorn members and member-owned businesses and co-ops. Some of the local Scottish shops in the area will take EKO's as well.

### **On and offline participatory decision-making has been around a long time. How is this different in your practice?**

I don't know anything about online participatory decision-making, however in actual communities, many, if not most, use consensus or some modification of it, and some communities now use Sociocracy, a decision-making and self-governance method from The Netherlands.

My own favorite method is the form of consensus used by N Street Cohousing in Davis, California. There, if someone blocks a proposal, the blocking person must meet with two or three people who wanted the proposal in a series of meetings to come up with a new proposal that addresses the same issues as the first proposal. If they do, the new proposal is brought to the next meeting, and most likely would pass. If not, the original proposal is brought back to the group for a 75% super-majority vote, which most likely would pass. For more details, see the article about this on my free online newsletter, "Ecovillages":

[http://www.ecovillagenews.org/wiki/index.php/Is\\_Consensus\\_Right\\_for\\_Your\\_Group%3F\\_Part\\_I](http://www.ecovillagenews.org/wiki/index.php/Is_Consensus_Right_for_Your_Group%3F_Part_I)

### **What is a "Gather-in?"**

I believe you're referring to the event sponsored by Gaia University at Huehucoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico in another article in Ecovillages newsletter ([http://www.ecovillagenews.org/wiki/index.php/What\\_Visiting\\_Huehucoyotl-Taught\\_Me](http://www.ecovillagenews.org/wiki/index.php/What_Visiting_Huehucoyotl-Taught_Me))

I think that by "gather-in" Gaia University means a "gathering," and is using playful language to describe it.

### **(9) Who are your heroes?**

In the communities movement, my heroes are Robert Gilman, Albert Bates, Max Lindegger, Hildur and Ross Jackson, and the other cofounders of the global ecovillage movement and GEN (Global Ecovillage Network) back in the early 1990s; Penelope Reyes, one of the founders of Pintig Ecovillage in the Philippines; Jan Gudman-Høyer, the architect who developed the cohousing concept in Denmark; and Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant, who brought cohousing to North America with their 1996 book, Cohousing.

### **What myths are you incorporating into your work? Are you making new ones?**

Perhaps all the activists in the intentional communities movement -- and this includes ecovillage activists and cohousing activists -- are creating a new myth, or perhaps a new culture, in which shared resources, cooperative decision-making and participatory self-governance, ecological sustainability, local food self-reliance, and a local economy are the norm. I'd want to live in a world like this!

<http://www.DianaLeafeChristian.org>

<http://www.EcovillageNews.org>

## Rebecca Alon, Slow Food Berkeley

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1220>

Please see companion post on Slow Food USA:

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1219>

### What is a "foodie?" ;-)

This is a huge question. It's kind of like asking, "What's an American?" :-) Years ago, I think the inception of the word Foodie connoted that you were staking a claim that Food or gastronomic pursuits comprised more than just a hobby.

For me personally, being a Foodie meant I didn't have to be embarrassed that most of my conversations ultimately turned to food; that it was okay to talk about where and what my next meal would be, before I was finished with the one I was eating.

But globally, I think the term Foodie has come to represent more. It shifted, from a narrower margin of Americans who are simply committed to talking and tracking and ingesting food, such as committing chef's names and resumes to memory, driving long distances for special ingredients or growing them yourself if necessity warrants, to taking on recipes that the average person would find tedious or overwhelming.

But now in 2009, I think being a Foodie can still mean all of those things, but I think it also encompasses more. Most foodies I know, whether they are part of the Slow Food Movement or not, are dedicated to understanding and preserving our shared food resources and traditions, and want to improve the distribution systems we've created to sustain and deliver calories to a wider spectrum of classes and geographic areas in a more fair way.

Now there are communities of Foodies, associated with groups, clubs or pleasure-seekers.

The term Foodie can definitely be defined across many categories and there is room for everyone. I think in Northern California we are lucky to have so many groups dedicated to Food; it's practically a religion here.

### Is your group organizing an eat-in (<http://eat-ins.org/>) any time soon? How would this type of event be sustainable?

Yes, Slow Food Berkeley and hundreds of other Slow Food chapters around the nation have announced and are currently planning over one hundred (and growing) community-based, large-scale simultaneous Eat-Ins, occurring Labor Day 2009, September 7th. The central focus is to bring awareness to School Lunch Reform, and we are calling the campaign Time for Lunch.

The push for reform, sparked by Slow Food USA's Director Josh Viertel and colleague Gordon Jenkins, (both men were very active in the Yale Sustainable Food Project, which reformed lunches on college campuses) we are taking action to make a statement. All of the International Slow Food chapters are aiming to bring people's attention to our youth- good, fair and clean food practices begin with feeding our children.

It's important activist statement for the community to reach out to politicians and insist on taking control, or at least persuading the decision makers to reconsider what is available to our kids during very impressionable years of their nutritional development. This massive political statement of communal sharing takes place on the one year anniversary of the first Eat-In, (<http://eat-ins.org/eat-ins/september-1-2008-san-francisco.html>) located in Dolores Park in San Francisco as part of Slow Food Nation. Slow Food is encouraging PTA groups, students, teachers and anyone to organize their own Eat-Ins to coincide with the larger-scale gatherings. An Eat-In is the equivalent of a Sit-In; we're not in agreement with the status quo, and we are going to take non-violent action to change it. At every Eat-in, local, freshly prepared foods are brought and shared by everyone who attends, essentially creating a politically-driven potluck party.

**"We are the Berkeley, CA chapter of Slow Food, a global grassroots movement to restore our health, our planet, our communities and our livelihoods by replacing fast food with good, clean and fair food." How are you tackling this**

## **impressive and seemingly unachievable mandate?**

Well, one fork at a time.

It is a "Fast Food Nation" we live in, but I believe things are changing. President Obama has a lot to do with that. Or I should say, Michelle Obama, I think food and health are a priority to her. Mrs. Obama's organic kitchen garden was a little like the "seed planting heard round the world."

It was different from other political actions in that it was not a referendum, a policy or a speech. It was action. Action that is simple because anyone with some grass or access to grass can mimic her and bury some seeds in the ground. Action that is interactive- because her kids participated and learned a new skill. It was also International action. A Russian reporter, <http://obamafoodorama.blogspot.com/>, told the President recently that his wife was more respected in Russia, because kitchen gardens are so popular there. But I think most importantly, it's a political action. It's the First Lady staking a claim in what goes into her and her family's mouth. And she is someone who could have any ingredient from any store she wanted.

But by growing fruit, vegetables and herbs herself, I believe she is going to influence the President and the current Administration to start thinking about how and what we are feeding ourselves, and how we do have a choice about the food offered to us on a daily basis. Alice Waters encouraged the President and First Lady to start a Victory Garden, during the campaign, and in meetings after his win, so it is very probable that our community here in Berkeley is directly related to this groundbreaking planting.

## **Who is your "competition (!?)"**

I don't think of Slow Food as having any competition. There are strong feelings about food, of course. Recently we held a Pig Roast in Tilden Park. Some of the pictures (<http://www.bigmagic.com/bigpigroast2009/>) were posted online, and they elicited a wide range of emotions. We are not endorsing Gluttony; if that's what it seems. It's a celebration of Summer and other cultures (we used a Caja China to roast the pig). It's also important to know where your meat products come from, in this age where food-borne illness seems to be on the rise.

## **How do you address the price vs. quality debate in the food community?**

The price of healthy food is something that we face as a Nation. We now know that one of the reasons fresh fruits and veggies are expensive, is because the corn industry is getting huge subsidies from our government. When I worked in Emeryville for a toy corporation, there was one restaurant in a 4 block radius using only locally-sourced ingredients and preparing them fresh on the premises. I would try to encourage my coworkers to eat there with me occasionally, and many thought it was too expensive. If the alternative option is Subway, and you can eat lunch for \$5, whereas a sandwich from the more sustainable cafe was \$7, isn't your health worth \$2 to you?

Everyone has to make these daily decisions for themselves. As a group, Slow Food generally does not preach overarching mandates or endorse any single grocer over another. We just try to provide forums for rejoicing around the abundance of good food in our community, and spread the abundance to friends and family.

Slow Food Berkeley sometimes hosts trips to the farms directly, to participate in U-Picks, where often you can purchase fruit and vegetables at lower prices because you pick it yourself. This isn't something the average person can do every week; it's too far away and takes some additional time. But we are lucky to have so many farms in California, growing a wide range of beautiful fruits, nuts, herbs and veggies. One resource for finding U-Picks is a website called Pick-Your-Own.org.

Another resource is a web-based application for the iPhone called Sprout, launched by Oakland-based Live Culture Co in collaboration with LocalNow (<http://www.localnow.net/>). And if you can't pick your own or grow your own, the farmers markets are a great way to buy directly from the producer, and often save some money while supporting local farms.

Another resource we have seen crop up recently are websites that encourage sharing of veggies and fruits. Veggietrader.com and Neighborhoodfruit.com are two examples. Sharing is the new(old) economy, in my opinion, and it's going to be getting more and more popular throughout the nation, I think. Bartering and sharing was really how our civilization progressed, before Keynes and before Smith came along.

**You seem to be not promoting a vegan diet or raw food diet via your association with The Bay Area Meat CSA (<http://bamcsa.ning.com>)? Is this an issue for some in Berkeley?**

We have people from all nutritional backgrounds in our group. The launch of our BAMCSA site (also called meatshare.org) in January 2009 is similar to a produce CSA box, in which you are supporting a local farm that you respect and want to support, by saying, I'll take whatever you can grow. Except in the case of a Meat CSA you are committing to the meat producer, and confirming that you will purchase the whole animal, before it is slaughtered.

This enables the farmers to focus on what they do best: raising high-quality herds, and leaves the butchery, distribution and delivery solutions to the consumer. It's a great alternative to factory-raised animals, and it's a learning tool. So far the response has been tremendously positive, and the folks on the website are not just Slow Food Berkeley members but anyone in the Bay Area. We have hundreds of people, divided by communities, and people are really gaining a lot from it, stocking up their freezers with fresh meat they can trust, and saving money by the way.

**How do you view the alt consumerist thing at WholeFoods? I note that this company is not in your Groceries, Distributors and Caterers list!**

I can't comment on this. I know nothing about it.

**If you were waiting at a cross walk in downtown Berkeley and a teen was standing there with a Big Mac, what would your 30 second "healthy foods" pitch be?**

Haha, that's an interesting question. Well I think teens are like all of us, very busy and very hungry, and love things that taste good. Again Slow Food Berkeley is not in the business of conversion, but if I knew this kid wanted to be healthier, I might point them to a street food vendor like the Brazil Fresh Squeeze Cafe, where they can get a tri-tip sandwich covered with creamy garlic cilantro sauce and a mango smoothie for eight bucks. Berkeley Bowl also has some great cheap lunches, I see the college kids in there a lot, getting fueled up on fresh salads and sandwiches to go.

**How are you folks involved in the local Farmer's Markets?**

The Berkeley Farmers Markets are great, and the Ecology Center has let us promote our events at their info booth. Come late August, as we are gearing up for our Time for Lunch synchronous Eat-Ins, we will be going to the Tues, Thurs and Sat Farmers Markets to ask citizens to sign our petition for School Lunch Reform ([http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/campaign/time\\_for\\_lunch/](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/campaign/time_for_lunch/)), which is in line with the National Child Nutrition Act, which comes up for review this year.

**What have you incorporated into your project from "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals" by Michael Pollan (<http://www.michaelpollan.com/write.php>)? Can you suggest any ways to improve his book?**

Pollan's book was a watershed moment in the history of food literature and investigative journalism. It was read by millions, and continues to gain momentum even now, with the national release of Food, Inc. which synthesizes his themes into a major motion picture. Personally, I feel very proud to have Pollan here in our community, teaching at UC Berkeley.

My interactions with him last fall during Slow Food Nation were greatly enhanced by having the opportunity to view him onstage at the Food for Thought series, which took place in San Francisco behind City Hall. Pollan was part of several panels that enlisted world leaders, activists, farmers and writers to talk about and debate the current situation of our Food and Food Systems. You can view these videos online, they are controversial and inspiring, and I believe should be mandatory viewing for all teenagers in our country.

<http://slowfoodnation.org/media/videos/>

**One of my “connectors” for food and diet is the time honored practice of sharing recipes. Does Slow Food Berkeley promote this activity? Is there (yet another!) cook book coming from you?**

Sharing recipes is a great tool for teaching others, and discovering new methods of cooking and new ingredients. We don't have any cookbooks planned right now, but we do host Grandmother Workshops regularly. These workshops are aimed at uncovering traditions and preserving them by demystifying them and teaching new skills to others. They are usually 20-30 people, in someone's kitchen or dining room, and are really fun.

In recent months, we've hosted, Making your own Pumpkin Pie from Scratch, Making Limoncello, Making Nocino (an Italian liqueur made from green walnuts), Making Gallettes and Making Cheese. We are planning to host more workshops soon, namely on Native American Foods, and Making Your own Bacon. We usually sell out, so if anyone is interested make sure to sign up for our e-newsletter at <http://slowfoodberkeley.com>.

**Slow Food Berkeley**

<http://slowfoodberkeley.com>

c/o Live Culture Co.

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## **Linda Delair, Futurist**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1230>

### **What is the “state of the planet?”**

We are in a hybrid period. Out of necessity (climate change, growing environmental awareness, global financial meltdown, compromised health, increasingly expensive health care, etc.) humanity is transitioning out of years of indifference and selfishness into a time of understanding the world we live in, and finding our rightful place in it.

### **Why should the average person care about a LEED building?**

The U.S. Green Building Council created Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED has become the benchmark for green building in the USA. Prior to LEED there were no real standards. Local Codes, yes, National Standards, no.

From Wikipedia: “LEED certified buildings often provide healthier work and living environments, which contributes to higher productivity and improved employee health and comfort. The USGBC has compiled a long list of benefits of implementing a LEED strategy which ranges from improving air and water quality to reducing solid waste, benefitting owners, occupiers, and society as a whole”.

Being that the average American spends 90% of their time indoors, the benefits of a healthy LEED building are obvious. So, why not build and retrofit our homes the same way with the same considerations? Also, residential and commercial buildings have large carbon footprints, something like 40% of the U.S. Energy Market, so replacing aging HVAC systems, appliances, and lighting systems greatly reduces energy consumption and a building’s carbon footprint.

### **How do you rate your experience at Buildt Green, in Berkeley.**

Please give some pros and cons.... There are no cons to Build It Green. The education available to the “building” community and people who are interested in the built environment, is excellent.

<http://www.builditgreen.org>

### **You write about building a...“Spiritually fulfilling and socially just human presence on Earth.” Sounds Utopian, perhaps unattainable. What is this place and how does one get to it?**

“This place” is yourself, and how you relate to the world around you. Each person votes with his or her dollars each time he or she exchanges money for a product or a service, because money tells the manufacturer or provider that we approve of the “dream” or “vision” they have of their company. Because of Watchdog Groups, and the Internet, the inner workings of companies are becoming more transparent, and the conscious shopper can choose whether or not he or she wants to support child labor, slave labor, unfair trade agreements, environmental degradation, and more.

Whatever you can think of to ask is just a click away on your search engine. Through signing petitions, letter writing campaigns, boycotting, etc. the message is clear – that dream, that old paradigm, is not working any longer. When we ask how products are made, and what are their effects are on earth’s life support systems, and each other, then we start to feel part of earth’s life support system, not separate from it, like we ARE the earth’s immune system, protecting our home, which our survival as a species depends upon. The third part of this 3 part harmony of environmental stability and social justice is spiritual fulfillment, because it just simply feels good to know we’re doing a good job taking care of business. Our planet’s health and welfare is definitely “our business”, our big ticket investment, and if not ours, then whose? Who is going to do this for us? Gandhi said “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for”. So, look around and see who is with you, and celebrate! That is spiritual fulfillment.

### **Can the art / practice of Feng Shui can help solve basic human issues, like environmental pollution and poverty?**

## **Any examples?**

Feng Shui is the art of placement. It's really common sense. If someone observes the lay of the land, ignores it and builds a house in a wind tunnel, how scattered will that person's thoughts be, always hearing rustling, breathing dust, and concerned about objects crashing into or falling on his house. In the book "Move your stuff, Change your life", Karen Rauch Carter interviews Barry Gordon, a physicist and Feng Shui master.

He says that "Feng Shui is the intelligent use of intentions through deep environmental metaphor.....every smidgen of our universe affects every other.....everything is contained in consciousness which has no boundaries....so the placement of your bed has meaning in relation to the rest of your experience. The bed is a representation of your beliefs and emotions on the physical dimension, which manifest differently, and seemingly disconnected by you, on other dimensions. When your bed is moved with intention, the belief and emotion dimensions also move."

Feng Shui is applied primarily to buildings, and energy reduction is on everyone's minds these days. An intention would be to build a passive house or retrofit an existing home or apartment requiring little energy for heating and cooling. When making purchases, ask first where they will end up as trash. When you throw something away, ask, "Where is away"? There is no away! Understand how that affects the world around you, and your place in it. If your intention is to build pathways out of poverty, use the 5 R's as a Guideline: Respect, Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

## **What myths are you using in the Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposiums?**

We say that we are awakening the dreamer, changing the dream. The Achuar, a tribe living in a remote part of the Amazon Rain Forest in Ecuador, is a true dream tribe. They place tremendous value on their dreams, and meet in the mornings to discuss the family's dreams from the night before.

To quote the Symposium " In the late 1980's, the Achuar elders and shamans began having dreams and visions that a grave threat was coming to their people. They soon realized what that threat was, as they began to see what contact with the outside world and its thirst for oil was doing to the land and cultures of their indigenous neighbors.....They made a bold move...and reached out to create a partnership with the very world that was threatening to destroy them.....This response to the call from the Achuar people to change the dream of the modern world is consistent with ancient indigenous prophecy – the Eagle and the Condor.

According to some ancient indigenous legends that go back millennia, the Eagle is the bird which represents societies that are very materialistic and very human oriented. And the Condor represents more spiritual societies and ones that feel more integrated with their environment. And so this legend said that every 500 years, we go through cycles, and the last cycle began at the end of the 1400's, roughly the time of Columbus. And it was predicted that during that cycle, the Eagle would dominate, but within 500 years, that cycle would start to change, and the Eagle and Condor would fly together in the same skies....and so, in a remote village in the rainforest, these two worlds came together, and the Pachamama Alliance was born."

<http://www.pachamama.org>

## **What myths are you creating?**

Again, quoting the Symposium: "We ...need to change the dream of the modern world, a dream rooted in consumption and acquisition, without any regard to the consequences to the natural world, or even our own future." "Out of our work with the Achuar, we came to see that we in the modern world truly are in some kind of trance, living a dream that's threatening to destroy not only the rain forest and the Achuar way of life, but the health and well-being of our entire planet...."

We are changing our dream by asking ourselves, what kind of unexamined assumptions have been leading us into such dreaded unintended consequences? How is it that we have accepted so much pain and suffering as a means to an end? For example, as a kid, when we would pull into a gas station, and the smell of pumping gas would make me sick, it never

occurred to me that that was unacceptable, to poison ourselves, because the end game was the car, which would take us where we wanted to go. Nausea and vomiting were just an unfortunate down side. Burning petroleum, and creating smog so bad that our eyes and lungs burn and we have global smog alert days so bad that people wear masks and the young and elderly are forced to stay inside, is madness. Yet, we've accepted this for ourselves - what can be done? Well, a lot can be done, and many of us are waking up to that. As I said earlier, we vote with our dollars. We are waking up to that. We are beginning to see we have been using the wrong operating manual, and we are changing that.

Thanks to the internet and the popularity of social networks, it is clear that we enjoy working with and trusting each other, globally, as we create the kind of world which respects, honors and supports life for all the children of all species – there are NO throw away species! This is a big shift away from the nightmare of fear and divisiveness our Western culture has been living, particularly for the last 200 years of the Industrial Revolution. Quoting the Symposium: “Environmental sustainability, spiritual fulfillment, and social justice, rather than being separate issues, are actually three interrelated facets of one profoundly interconnected whole.”

### **Is there a “critical mass” for the vision of the Dream Symposiums to make a difference?**

Yes we can, and Yes we did, and Yes we are continuing to do so, as a Labor of Love.

### **Has the economic crisis impacted your bottom line? Have you invented new ways to serve your clients?**

I had to re-invent myself, make myself more available to people, because this conversation about sustainability is not limited to green building. “How we live our days is how we live our lives”. That’s a quote from I don’t know who, but I think about it a lot. I asked myself, What do I do without a job? Will I still feel like I’m contributing to the changes which are so necessary now, not tomorrow when I have more money? The answer is yes, because I am human, and humans need to open up and be part of the discussion that we need each other now, more than ever, and wake up and fall in love with life, food, each other, animals, air, water, krill, whales, bees, bats, whatever rocks your world, now.

Not tomorrow or in your dreams, well, maybe your dreams are telling you that you are loved, and it’s time to show up because the time to complain about how things are not going your way is over. The issues are far bigger than petty grievances. All hands are needed on deck, now! So I’m doing this interview and saying what comes through me because I get in my gut that Love Wins! But not without me. That’s a party I don’t want to miss.

### **Does the human race need to adopt a vegan or raw food diet to survive?**

The human race has the wonderful choice to support their local communities and become involved with how their food is grown and their meat raised. Educate yourself on those issues. If it hurts you how it’s grown, then don’t eat it. Eat what feels right. Educate yourself on these issues. Visit the website:

<http://www.foodincmovie.com>

You’re alive on this earth and part of the life support systems that support life as we know it. As you know it.

### **What is your track record on Bay Area social justice issues?**

Other than being a Facilitator of the Awakening The Dreamer Symposium, I am the Vice President of the Board of Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity. AHO is a youth run, adult supervised Nonprofit working with youth between the ages of 16 and 25 who are either homeless, or at the risk of homelessness – in Marin. Marin? Youth homelessness in Marin? Yes, and lots of it. Please visit our website <http://www.ahoproject.org>. I am also involved with Challenge Day, Challenge Day’s vision is that every child lives in a world where they feel safe, loved and celebrated.

Check out their website and participate in a Challenge Day. You’ll never be the same again.

<http://www.challengeday.org>

I am also a big supporter of Van Jones' Ella Baker Center: <http://www.ellabakercenter.org> and Green For All: <http://www.greenforall.org>

**Linda Delair**

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## **Gever Tulley, Tinkering School Director**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1240>

**PlanetShifter.com is developing a companion channel called PlanetShifterKids.com that will give kids project space and collaborative tools to tackle sustainability-related issues in their neighborhoods and beyond. Please describe how you would advise us as to your work in Kit-based Learning? Do you prescribe the process and the possible results for the kids?**

We have a term that we use to describe what we look for in a kit-based experience; "projectory". A simple mash-up of the notions of "project" and "trajectory", projectory is a project that leaves the child on a trajectory that extends the experience beyond the end of the project.

For example, suppose that the project is to build a rope-ladder using recycled materials - there could be elements of rope-making (perhaps from plastic grocery bags), knot-tying, and rung-finding - a simple idea, but one that only leads to others. Somewhere along the process of making the rope-ladder, the tinkerer will realize that they are building a ladder into a tree - but then what? "I'm going to be sitting up in a tree, I should have a seat..." The ladder provokes ideas, the future expands and unfolds in the child's mind, taking them beyond the contents of the kit and the initial definition of the project.

Regarding prescribing the process, we choose which projects will be undertaken at Tinkering School, not because kids are bad at coming up with interesting projects to work on, but because we have so little time. Within that initial project definition, we allow anything to happen. With just one week to work with them, it's really important to make sure that their velocity (creative, intellectual, and productive) is not hampered by materials or tools. Choosing which projects we are going to work on in a given session allows us to stock the shelves with everything the kids might need. That being said, the projects are fluid and often change as the tinkerers embrace the ideas and take them in surprising directions. Each project is inevitably a creative collaboration, and when it comes time to move on to the next project, we're often torn between seeing where the current endeavor can go and seeing what the new project will bring.

**Please answer your own question! "Can countries achieve competitive advantage by teaching their kids to be more innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial?"**

I think it's quite likely. There is always someone, somewhere, with more resources than you, that will be able to learn the newest technologies before you can, but being able to think, to problem-solve, to make things work even when the "best" solution is not available will always be more valuable. If there is a single great lesson to be learned from Web 2.0, it may be "everything you make will become someone else's brick." Which is great from a sharing perspective, but it creates a lot of competition for the people making bricks.

The person who can move fluidly between conceptualization and implementation (whether in software, hardware, science, or social systems), shifting effortlessly back and forth between those mental modes will have the advantage over the people who can only operate in a single mode. It is easy to find labels for single-mode thinkers (engineer, programmer, designer) and when we meet true multi-mode thinkers we have to start hyphenating. We describe them as designer-developer or architect-designers, and it becomes clear that we don't really have good language for people who are just good at stuff.

Our current educational system promotes the development of single-mode thinkers. Some would say that it's a natural consequence of the industrial revolution - factories needed workers with standardized qualifications in mass quantities and schools responded. But the world doesn't need another person who can operate a CAD program, it needs a person who can solve the problems they face using the tools and resources available.

**The Tinkering School is not about values, then? Or is it? Can you ID some?**

Tinkering School is really about ideas, but we have values - if that makes sense. We value unscripted, real, hands-on

experiences for kids. We value the minor scrape and bruise and lessons that they teach. We value the plans that go awry, and the ideas that are just so big that they must be attempted. We work to re-open the world to children who are increasingly treated like exotic animals kept in special cages and fed a diet of pre-digested ideas lest they become upset. We value the empty lot next door with abandoned car rusting in the weeds. We value the really good stick and the lovely bit of string.

**Do you know about Facing the Future's Service Learning program ([www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org))? Any feedback?**

What's not to like? I'm going to need to spend a bit of time to really dig into what you are doing there, but connecting young thinkers to actual issues can only help. Who knows what you set in motion when a child starts thinking about a problem?

**How much learning at the Tinkering School is individually based vs collaboratively based? What is your theory on this aspect?**

At the heart of the approach is the notion that all learning is ultimately personal, but the context is collaborative more than individual at the Tinkering School. We always have some solo projects, but even those are in a collective scope. If we are all making tabletop motorized vehicles, then we see co-evolution of ideas as well as punctuated equilibrium in the design space.

You can see this idea in how we talk about our volunteers as well. On any given project we divide into "collaborators" and "consultants". Collaborators work at a peer, or cohort, level with the kids, whereas consultants move between the teams and provide specialized technical insight on an as-needed basis.

One of the things that is so interesting about developing kit-based experiences and books is trying to stay true to the notions of collaboration and personal discovery, and avoid creating an experience that feels like it's on rails.

**Do you think that most parents feel up to date on the latest computer hardware and software as compared to their children? How can this be corrected?**

Young children make no distinction between the magic of the computer and the magic of the power-drill, or the dishwasher. So it's natural that they would approach these devices with equal aplomb. This puts our generation at a disadvantage when it comes to embracing technology - in point of fact the very notion of "embracing technology" is an idea created by people who don't. We are still marveling at the pace of innovation, but the kids accept rapid evolution of technology as a given.

Does it matter that a child's understanding of the computer and the internet is more nuanced and complete than their parents? History shows that the models we make internally are slow to change - our vocabulary for describing the complexity of the internet relies on metaphors taken from household plumbing - a child's non-vocalized internal model of the internet has got to be better than that. The way to close the gap between parent and child models might be to wait until the child can describe it to the parent.

**How much risk is acceptable in a kid's life in play or at school? How do you measure and evaluate risk at play?**

Let's talk about the mitigation of risk, rather than the quantity or severity. You don't hand a child a chainsaw (to pick a deliberately extreme example) and say "Have fun!", you start with a hand-saw, or a pocket-knife, and you build a foundation of skills and techniques that make using a chainsaw safe.

If there is something to be gained, then some risk is acceptable. But we always look for the catastrophic risk, the danger that can't be mitigated. After the roller coaster project a few years ago, I started sketching Ferris-wheels of various designs, but have never come up with one that doesn't drop one kid onto the others when it breaks - so we haven't done a Ferris-wheel project yet.

I often try to look at the value of play, and the potential for learning in the activity. Tinkering School has a long tradition of after-dark hide-and-seek tag - a game that started in our house the very first year. The game is played in total darkness, and involves much sprinting and screaming. Watching the kids play it is enough to make any parent faint, and yet we have never had a hide-and-seek tag related injury. Every year we talk about hide-and-seek tag, and every year we decide that it is just so much fun, such a total sensory integration, that we allow it to continue.

It is common to try to defend play by adding protective modifiers to it. There are people studying "serious play", "exploratory play", "creative play", "object play", and "competitive play". When I managed an innovation group at Adobe Systems, I hosted workshops on "playful development". These are all efforts to make the notion of "play" more palatable to a corporate and scientific world.

Stuart Brown, at the National Institute for Play ([www.nifplay.org](http://www.nifplay.org)), got it right when he said "Play is the exploration of the possible." We encourage play, both within and outside the scope of the projects. Playing with the materials builds a deeper intuitive understanding of the properties of the material, playing with tools helps develop motor-skills, muscle memory, and leads to better control of the tool when the time comes to build something precise.

### **Please tell about your work with SETI.**

I am personally intrigued by the notion of a message hidden in the signals we already receive from space. The data is stupefyingly enormous, and the chance that we'll catch a meaningful signal is slight - but what an interesting challenge! I participated in some early discussions about creating crowd-sourced tools to allow anyone on the internet to participate in the process of sifting the categorizing the signals.

### **How do you evaluate the success of the Potential Energy Vehicle Kit?**

([www.flickr.com/photos/gevertulley/sets/72157617434361063/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/gevertulley/sets/72157617434361063/))

The PEV kit is a work in progress, but as far as I'm concerned, it's already a success. One of our beta-testers, after building the vehicle, questioned the notion that the "energy is stored in the weight" when the weight is lifted, and then decided that the energy was really stored in the relationship between the Earth and the weight. Setting up that kid for that epiphany alone was worth the development time put into the kit so far.

What we are learning by working on the PEV kit has more to do with kit-based experiences and manufacturing than the specifics of the PEV. There is a lot more to do on the PEV kit to achieve "projectory" status and to blur the boundaries between the kit and the materials that each child can incorporate.

### **Your lament about the "disappearance of the pocket knife is interesting. What has replaced it?**

I get a lot of email from rural parents who are still giving their children pocket knives, and urban parents who can't give their kids knives because of school rules. The true cost of violence in our schools cannot be measured simply by the injuries and deaths, but must also include a reckoning of the loss of opportunity for kids. In urban settings we replace the pocket knife with the video game and the cell phone, but do those tools encourage children to interact with their environments in the same way that the knife would? A pocket knife is a screwdriver, a pry-bar, a scraper, a cutter, a drill, and a poker - how can we logically deprive kids of this science-lab-in-your-pocket experience?

### **Do you approve of the tools, programs and rewards in the Boy Scout program?**

I take umbrage with the gender bias and impositional aspects of the rewards in Boy Scout programs, but anything that creates opportunities for kids to get out of the house is a step in the right direction. I'm especially concerned with the fund-raising systems wherein kids are roped into becoming part of a marketing engine for a cookie manufacturer or magazine publisher, and would much rather see some kind of service-based experience where the kids could raise money by doing good. I'd pay a dollar a pound to have Boy Scouts remove plastic from beaches, or five dollars an hour to have them repair homeless shelters or wash trucks for the fire department.

## **Can you dumb-down your ideas on why “throwing things” is good for us?**

There are structures in our brains that don't grow correctly unless we use them as they are developing. Our brains are fierce optimizers during childhood development and unused neurons are quickly re-tasked or re-absorbed unless they get fired and tuned. This means that if we take up throwing things later in life, we have to develop whole new structures in our brains - we can't just awaken dormant connections that we ignored earlier in life (or at least not in all cases).

Throwing is just an example of an activity that forces us to interact with all the complexities of the real-world. I liked to spin things when I was a kid, still do in fact, and now can reliably spin anything from a tiny pebble to a wheelbarrow. I am especially good at fruit and coins. And, throwing, or spinning, things is just pure fun. Fun is good for the whole brain, it reduces stress, lengthens life, and helps us be more creative.

## **I like your idea about the value of understanding the “parts” of larger complex structures. Where did this come from?**

It starts with the idea that anything, from the simple to the complex, the natural or the manufactured, can be understood. The idea that big complex things, like a truck, are made of smaller things, each a little simpler, is an important element of the foundational concepts that allow us think about and solve big problems. The further realization that this applies across enormous scales, from the galactic to the sub-cellular, paves the way for a deep understanding of the nature of complexity and organization.

Take a part a dishwasher and every part can be decomposed into smaller parts until you are left with a pile of pieces, each of which can be completely understood by visual inspection. Computers obfuscate their internal details by hiding them in chips and invisible traces buried in layers of circuitry, but the concepts still apply. After having taken apart a few simpler machines, the kids seem to have no problem accepting the idea that even though they can't see inside every chip, there is still something in there that can be understood (give time and tools).

## **How many new tools have your kids invented, if any?**

There is some ad-hoc tool construction when kids are building, mostly clamps and odd support systems, but there has not been much actual tool development. This may be due in large part to the plethora of tools available to the tinkers. It's really a question of keeping their creative attention focused on the project.

**These were some great questions. All the best, -g**

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## **Matt Dubel, Project Coordinator**

### **Sustainable Schools for Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1267>

#### **What is sustainability?**

We think of sustainability as the process of improving quality of life-economic, social, and environmental-for all in current and future generations. There are many perspectives on sustainability, and frankly there should be, because acknowledging multiple perspectives is an important element of thinking sustainably.

But there are common elements: obviously the focus on the well-being of current as well as future generations; the recognition of the interconnectedness of economic, social, and ecological systems; and the commitment to equity ("for all" being perhaps the most unassumingly radical words in our definition). In fact, one way to think about sustainability is to think about equity in three dimensions: intra-species equity (between humans), inter-species equity (between humans and the rest of the living world), and inter-generational equity (between those living now and those that will follow us).

#### **Are you espousing a service learning model?**

We believe that service learning is an important strategy in education for sustainability, since it challenges students to use their understanding and skills to improve the well-being of their community and work in the present toward their visions of a desirable future. When done well, it cultivates empathy for others (human and more than human) and makes learning relevant for students by connecting it to real lives in real communities.

#### **Please share some specific programming innovations from Lawrence Barnes Elementary School and Champlain Elementary School (VT); As an introduction, how is SSP using sustainability as an integrating context for :**

##### **a. curriculum**

##### **b. community partnerships**

##### **c. campus practices**

Well, to begin with, Lawrence Barnes Elementary School (in Burlington, VT) is transforming into the Sustainability Academy, a public magnet school for grades K-5. To our knowledge it's the first elementary magnet school in the U.S. to have a sustainability theme. They've done remarkable work in using sustainability as a lens on the things that elementary schools need to teach--from persuasive writing to history, from scientific inquiry to cultures.

The idea is not to teach sustainability as a discrete topic, but to use sustainability as an overarching theme to help connect the many things that schools need to teach. At the same time, there's a recognition that students learn many lessons each day, and that many of them are not part of the formal curriculum. The way schools use energy, the way they interact with the community, the food they serve, what they do with their waste, how people are treated within the building--all of these practices teach the students. So the Sustainability Academy is explicitly designed to use what we call the "4 C's" to teach students: Curriculum, Campus Ecology, Community Engagement, and Collaboration.

A great example that integrates all of these is the Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids project, which was developed by 4th/5th grade teachers working with the Sustainable Schools Project and Smart Growth Vermont. This project engages students in acting like community planners: identifying the features that contribute to quality of life in their community and developing indicators to measure those features; conducting community-based research by collecting data on these indicators in their neighborhood; sharing their findings with the community and public officials; and designing and implementing a service project that improves community well-being by addressing their research findings.

In the process, the project helps students learn many of the things that 4th/5th graders need to learn: persuasive

writing, oral presentations, inquiry skills, data collection and analysis, project planning, not to mention content knowledge involving government and civics, energy and ecology, etc. The neighborhood becomes their classroom, public officials and community groups become their partners, and all of their work has tangible results that students can see. In a sense, I think this project exemplifies what education is for in a democracy: to prepare us to work together to do the work that needs doing in order for us to create the communities we want. That's powerful 21st century learning, whether or not there happens to be a PowerPoint presentation involved.

### **Tell us about the interaction between SSP and Shelburne Farms.**

Shelburne Farms is a rather complex and wonderful non-profit organization, at once an environmental education center, working farm, National Historic Landmark, and demonstration site for stewardship and sustainability. We're based in Shelburne, Vermont, but we work with schools and communities around the region, around the country, and around the world. The Sustainable Schools Project is an initiative of Shelburne Farms, working in partnership with schools and school districts, other non-profits, government agencies, businesses, and higher education institutions.

### **When was the last evaluation completed for the SSP? How are you doing?**

Evaluation of SSP is continuous. We're part of the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC), a group of several similar projects who do shared evaluation. Our findings suggest that the work we're doing energizes teachers, transforms school culture, helps students learn, connects schools and communities, and encourages students to become stewards and active citizens.

### **How are urban schools different from country schools?**

I think it's hard to generalize about urban, rural, suburban, etc., because in my experience the biggest gaps arise from socioeconomic status. Poor rural schools often share the same challenges as poor urban schools. Their students can often feel trapped and without options, certainly without a sense that their community needs them. Our conviction, whether we're working with an urban or a rural community, is that lots of good things happen when students are given opportunities to learn by making a difference in their own community. Student engagement increases, student learning increases, teachers feel revitalized, social capital is built, community perceptions of students shift, students' perceptions of themselves shift, etc.

### **What is a Legacy Card?**

Legacy Card is a project which involves students in learning about sustainability by visiting sites throughout their community. Students receive a booklet, like a passport, that guides them to various sites--businesses, non-profits, community spaces--and participate in an experience that develops their understanding of the work that people in their community do that contributes to quality of life.

### **How does SSP deal with the notion of citizen? Is this controversial in any way?**

We feel that anyone at any age who engages in the process of community decision-making or who collaborates to improve the well-being of a community is acting as a citizen. Of course it includes participating in decision-making within formal channels (city councils, legislatures, etc.), but it's more than just that. And of course it's about engagement to improve human lives, but it's also more than that.

I think of it as closer to what Wendell Berry describes as "membership," a sense of engagement with both the human and ecological community within which we live and a commitment to collaborative action on behalf of those communities. We believe strongly that we're not preparing students to be citizens someday; they're citizens now, and the best way to learn to be a responsible citizen is to get lots of practice. Schools are well-positioned to support students in this practice.

### **I love the notion of wonder. What is this?**

I would describe it as the innate sense of fascination with the world around us and the desire to connect with it and learn more about it. We feel that when teaching builds on students' inborn sense of wonder, it's likely to be more powerful and more effective.

**What is the green movement and how does it differ from other movements? Are you creating a mythology of sustainability? What are the new symbols and stories?**

I think the way forward involves a certain amount of rediscovery of ancient and indigenous symbols and stories. Interestingly, much of what scientists are discovering about complex systems is reflected in the wisdom of ancient and indigenous cultures, particularly the profoundly interconnected nature of the world. Linda Booth-Sweeney has done a great job of collecting these stories in her book *Connected Wisdom*.

But these ancient sources will also be synthesized with new insights. Biomimicry is a great example of this. I think nature provides a lot of potent symbols to inform the way we design human communities. Borrowing from Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy*, I think the new story is that it's not about More, it's about Better.

**Matt Dubel**

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Sustainable Schools Project

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## Jacob Haqq-Misra, Scientist, Musician and Author

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1271>

### Interview One

**“We are but a single member of a cosmic community whose extent reaches farther than imagination.” What is farther than our imaginations, Jacob? Have you been there?**

No matter how much we explore, no matter how much we learn, theorize, and describe, and no matter how much we imagine beyond the observed, we will never have all the answers. Beyond the limits of our imagination we might comprehend the significance of the cosmos--or come to realize its insignificance--or we might discover a supernatural mode of operation. But no matter where we are as individuals, a species, or a population, the inherent limits of our ability to observe and explore means that the universe will always be more than we can ever comprehend.

**Does there have to be another planet like Earth out there? Why or why not?**

There is probably no other planet *\_exactly\_* like Earth in that it contains trees, grass, lions, elephants, and people. From an evolutionary point of view, the probability of humans (or tigers, or any particular creature) evolving twice on different planets is so small it is essentially zero. On the other hand, we have found over 300 planets around other stars to date and continue to find new ones every week. Large planets are easier to find, but we are slowly discovering smaller and smaller planets, some of which are rocky like our Earth. Given the 100 billion stars in our galaxy, it seems likely that Earth-sized planets should exist around other stars as well.

And following this logic, it also seems likely that at least some of these Earth-sized planets would also be the right distance from their star to support liquid water on the surface. Again, this doesn't mean the planet is identical to Earth in every way, but it would be the closest Earth-like planet we've found yet. The galaxy is a huge place, and so it may be presumptuous to think ours is the only planet capable of sustaining oceans, climate, and perhaps life.

**Please define and discuss: belief vs. proof; religion vs. spirituality. Fear vs. hope. God vs. Mother.**

Proof implies a logical conclusion for accepting a statement, whereas belief is the acceptance of a statement without necessarily requiring observable demonstration of the statement's truth. Proof is often sloppily used in science, as it is nearly impossible to "prove" a statement to be true 100% of the time. In reality, we have statements that are accepted as the most accurate description based on what we know now.

The theory of evolution is accepted by most scientists because it fits biological and geological observations better than any competing idea, but it is not a belief. Religious zealots believe in a personal God even in the absence of logical demonstration, which does not equate to a proof of God.

Any form of expression that purports to connect known human activity with the unknown supernatural realm (beyond imagination) is spiritual expression. This can be as simple as solitary music listening or as complex as a wedding ritual. Religion enters the picture when spiritual expression becomes part of cultural tradition, usually including some standardization of myth and organizational hierarchy. Spirituality is necessary for religion, but the reverse is not necessarily true. On the other hand, religion can be useful because it uniformly engages human populations on a spiritual level. In spite of all the historical atrocities of religion, it is interesting to note that even today religious organizations rank among the highest of those who provide charitable and humanitarian aid to those in need.

**How should we quantify cosmic significance.**

I think this has more to do with human ego. Nothing we could possibly do will ever have significance on a cosmic scale. Even if we somehow manage to colonize all 100 billion stars in our galaxy, there are as many galaxies in the universe! Astronomy humbles even the proudest among us, and so trying to measure our importance on a cosmic scale misses the mark and leads to delusions of grandeur.

## **Why can't dolphins be the aliens? What can't the Sea be the altUniverse many seek?**

If we're looking for other communicating intelligent creatures, then dolphins are certainly a good candidate! And yes, the oceans have many undiscovered secrets that will certainly illuminate our attempts to understand the phenomenon of life on this planet. However, it seems likely that us and dolphins share a common genetic ancestor about 450 million years ago, so we both originated on Earth and we both are related. Any truly extraterrestrial form of life must have formed at a different time and place than the origin of life on Earth around four billion years ago.

## **'Every experience impacts you' ... we are a library of experiences.' How does this work in your life?**

There are friends I've had for years who have impacted me less than an evening's encounter with a homeless man on the streets. We can't undo an experience once it happens, nor can we selectively forget experiences. When I read a book the knowledge and argument of the book enters my library of experiences, whether or not I like it, and thereby shapes my future thoughts and opinions. Books and movies are more obvious examples of this, but really any experience--whether a conversation, a sight, or a sound--can leave a lasting impression.

## **Is technology and the web teaching us to collaborate or just to fight smarter for self-interest with expensive tools?**

Technology certainly helps collaboration and cross-disciplinary learning, though it also helps us find new ways to compete. In the end, while technology can provide us with useful tools I do not think technology itself has the capability to save us. Many people are optimistic that any problems we may cause, such as climate change or overpopulation, will be remedied by matching advances in technology. However, I remain skeptical that the problems of exponential growth will be matched by exponential increases in technology. Our inventions certainly have an important role to play in our future, but technology must also be developed and managed with wisdom.

## **How are we going to "get past" religion (i.e. dominion) and survive in the Sustainability Age?**

This is the challenge I leave with religion in my book. If we don't get past the notion of dominion, then our exponential consumption will eventually be the end of us all. Conversely, if we transition to sustainable development, then we will necessarily have rid ourselves of this notion of dominion. This is because we will have learned to think of ourselves in a new way, not as the masters of the world but instead as part of the world. As far as religion goes, any religion that maintains a theology of dominion must change or die. In the Sustainability Age, a religion of dominion will be obsolete, and so any surviving religions will necessarily reinforce concepts of human unity with the planet. Religion may lag behind society and ultimately become obsolete, but religion also has the chance to grab the reins and take the lead in ensuring our long-term survival.

## **"We must remember that we are not special." Who are you talking to, Jacob?**

This applies to all of us who at one time or another have lived according to the belief in human entitlement, that everything in the world should be useful for humans. In a sense, this includes all of us who are part of the global human civilization because at least some of our food and energy is produced at the expense of others. At the same time, many people are increasingly becoming aware of these issues and are realizing our connection, instead of our dominion, to this planet.

## **How would you make evolution less threatening?**

Evolutionary education still perpetuates misconceptions about the theory of evolution. For example, a classic image shows human evolution as a progression of ape-like creatures that slowly gain upright posture until homo sapiens arrive on the scene. The problem with such an image is that it portrays evolution as a linear process by which a certain species (humans) eventually arise. Evolution, however, is non-directional and operates on populations, not species. Humans were not intended by evolution nor are we an end point of any sort. Evolution is simply a mechanism by which the gene pools of populations can change over time. In some ways evolution might be less threatening if it is not used to reinforce

the mantra of human dominion, where homo sapiens represent the apex of evolution. If we instead focus on how evolution develops diverse ecosystems to ensure long-term survival, then perhaps it will be less threatening to some.

### **Is the Soul unique to humans? Is this the same source as what you label "universal essence?"**

I use the term "soul" interchangeably with "divine essence" and "universal essence", and it could equally be applied to the term "mind" or "spirit". In effect, I mean to indicate the part of us that exists beyond the material (atoms and molecules); it is the part of us (if any) that persists beyond physical death in an afterlife. In my book I argue that it is extremely difficult to maintain that only humans have this soul. To be self-consistent with what we know about evolutionary theory, either everything living must have a soul or else nothing does.

### **Buy Planetary Messenger:**

<http://www.amazon.com/Planetary-Messenger-Jacob-Haqq-Misra/dp/1442110546/>

<https://www.createspace.com/3376588>

## **Jacob Haqq-Misra Interview Two**

Beyond the Intersection of Art and Sustainability

*"Don't the hours grow shorter as the days go by  
You never get to stop and open our eyes  
One minute you're waiting for the sky to fall  
The next you're dazzled by the beauty of it all  
Lovers in a dangerous time...  
These fragile bodies of touch and taste  
This fragrant skin this hair like lace  
Spirits open to the thrust of grace  
Never a breath you can afford to waste...  
Nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight  
Got to kick at the darkness till it bleeds daylight"*

Lovers in a dangerous time  
Stealing Fire, Bruce Cockburn

### **Robyn Hitchcock told me that music is a form of alchemy – perhaps an invisible attempt to alter people's moods. Your reactions?**

Music certainly has the ability to alter a person's mood, induce emotion, and even lower inhibitions. Some music, like classical symphonies or Pink Floyd studio albums, take the listener on a journey and tend to emphasize lyrical elements and emotional motifs. Other forms of music, such as jazz and its derivatives, are more groove-based and emphasize movement and dance as an expression of participation. One way of identifying a culture, subculture, or counterculture is to observe the types of music that are used to form social cohesion. That is, groups tend to rally around certain behaviors and ideals that are typified in certain types of music.

### **Hero. Define yours? Are you a hero?**

Heroes are the champions that rescue us from peril that we could not have escaped otherwise. Some people have heroes, but I suspect many more people have role models instead. Heroes tend to be idolized, whereas role models provide examples to live a fulfilled life. My role models include Desmond Morris, Joseph Campbell, Jesus of Nazareth, David Byrne, Carl Sagan, and many, many others. To my knowledge I am not a hero to anyone, though I try to constantly be a role model to others.

## **What are the sounds from pre-history? Do you sample nature? The City?**

Music is everywhere, and I typically leave the iPod at home when walking around outside. Cities sound different from lakes and forests, all of which are bustling with sound when we take the time to listen. It's becoming increasingly rare, though, to experience a sound scape devoid of human-build machinery. Even at a remote campsite you can often hear the quiet yet distinct hum of the electric generator! I've noticed that the quieter an environment I create, the more easily I can hear the soft electric murmurs that I typically ignore. I don't sample many sounds at all, as I play most of my music acoustically.

## **Is the era of sustainability a form of religion? The end of a world? What's next?**

In short, if humans want to live for long periods of time (tens of millions of years), then we must transition to sustainable development. If we decide this isn't important, then that's fine, too; Earth will continue just fine without us. Getting people to think on longer timescales is the tricky part, and I do think this crosses into the realm of religion. Sustainability itself is not a religion, but achieving sustainable development will require world religion to adopt a view that is compatible with sustainable living.

## **What effects does commercial music and television have on our well-being?**

Commercial music and television serve two primary functions:

1) entertainment and

2) marketing. Both of these goals are achieved at low-cost in order to maximize profits, without necessarily considering artistic merit. As a result, a radio or television consumer is constantly updated with products, events, ideas, and other forms of cultural identity. This media mythology becomes a part of the consumer's knowledge and inevitably affects their view of the world.

## **Do you know any angels? Can I meet them?**

I haven't met any so far.

## **What are some of the initiations that you went thru? Still working on?**

Writing my book was a form of initiation. I'm still working on my educational initiation, just about a year away from my PhD! I never took a break from school, so I'm looking forward to the culmination of my 20+ year scientific initiation.

## **What is Gaia? Where can we see / hear this force?**

Gaia is the Earth system, the super organism in a sense that results from the interactions of life, climate, and geologic processes. We see and hear this force everywhere we look and listen, for every species and every ecosystem is necessarily a part of Gaia.

## **What is Tao? How does your music work with the mind – body - spirit triad?**

Music can induce dance, create thought, or provide mystic enlightenment. In many cases, music finds the performer or listener to provide what is needed at the time.

## **How are you a Shaman? Is this a title that you apply to yourself or one that others have given you? How would know if I am one?**

If a Shaman is one who seeks after spiritual knowledge, then I could be counted as one. That said, I never apply the title of Shaman to myself. Many people interested in psychedelic substances will validate their experiments by pointing to

tribal shaman leaders who also used psychedelic drugs. I think this comparison is often misguided, though, for the tribal shaman was probably the only member of the entire tribe privileged to commune with the divine in this way.

Indeed, I'd be willing to venture that the societal structure of tribes based around psychoactive plants resulted as a need to keep the power of the plants from abuse by the common folk. A shaman who carefully prepares to enter the unknown can then take the mysterious knowledge of the plant drug and pass it on in a useful form to the rest of the tribe. In today's culture, though, we assert that everyone can be a shaman. I agree that everyone can (and should) explore their own spirituality, but I would consider a shaman to be a protector of a divine mystery for the sake of a community.

**When are dreams not just "9-5" dreams but messages from another energy source? How do you incorporate scenes and beings from your dreams in to your waking hours?**

All dreams provide an insight to our unconscious minds. Some dreams may be rote and boring while others are frightening or adventurous, but all dreams give us a look at how our minds are preparing for the coming days. In this sense, any dream we remember is potentially useful in waking life.

**Do you write music based on your dreams?**

I haven't yet written dream-based music. The character Greta in my book is based on one of my dream characters, though.

**How do you think women's reverence for the sacred differs from men's?**

In my observation, women tend to value the expression of the sacred differently than men. Men tend to be the pastors and clergy of a religious organization, but it is the women who make a point of bringing their children and families to worship. Some women also seem to have an easier time moving past any logical objections to religious or spiritual pursuit.

**Define myth. What myths are critical to your spirit these days?**

A myth is any story that explains any aspect of what it means to be human. A myth is a vehicle for communicating an idea without any regard to its historicity, plausibility, predictability, or factual truth. David & Goliath, King Arthur, the Big Bang, and the Industrial Revolution are all mythological because they are all stories that address the purpose and meaning of human life.

Personally, I find myself returning to the New Testament gospels in terms of a religious text. Through my studies I am steeped in scientific myth, which I find tremendously valuable, and for comic myth I find myself attracted to the South Park animated series these days.

**What are your three favorite sci-fi movies?**

- K-PAX
- The Matrix
- Spaceballs

**Your posted song, Grapesmoke (hallucination) on PlanetShifter.com, <http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1260>, is a hybrid of emotions. Nicely layered. How does it make you feel?**

For me it is important that music induces movement. The layered rhythms underlying this song persist even through changes so that a dancer is kept up and moving the entire song. Even with aggressive drums, this song makes me sit on the edge of my chair, head bobbing, alert yet relaxed. It's good music for a drive.

**Jacob Haqq-Misra**

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## **Laura Tam, Sustainable Development Policy Director San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1341>

### **How do you define localization?**

I don't really use this word, but I certainly believe that local decisions have global implications. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for example, is an essential local response to a pressing global issue.

### **What are the top five sustainability principles driving [SPUR](#)?**

High density cities are a way to manage humanity's ecological footprint. Environmental quality and economic vitality go hand in hand. The decisions we make about resources, infrastructure, and development today should not lock us into a future that cannot be sustained. Reducing our ecological footprint now is more important than doing so later. Conservation and efficiency are better investments than expanding supply, for natural resources.

Environmental impacts and the cost of protecting the environment must be equitably distributed. I could go on! At SPUR, I organize my work into six policy areas in which I apply these principles: water, wastewater, climate change, energy, green buildings, and environmental health.

### **How do you practice the green life at home?**

Well, it's an ongoing project. We live in a pretty small, urban home - about 800 square feet for the three of us. We take public transit to and from work every day, including dropping our son off at daycare. We bike to and from the grocery store - we mostly support a neighborhood grocer who has a lot of great organic and locally grown produce. We are vegetarians.

My baby is in cloth diapers. We compost all our food waste, recycle almost everything else, turn off lights, use minimal water, have dimmer switches and timers everywhere to make our house compliant with California's Title 24, which as you may know, has kept our state's residential energy use basically flat for 25 years, in spite of population growth. Of course, there is more we can do. Some of our household appliances are not that efficient, but we'll replace them with low-water, low-energy models as they wear out. We are hoping to replace our cemented-over yard with vegetables and native, drought-tolerant plants, and to get a rain barrel to harvest the rain from our roof. We'd love to replace our car with a plug-in hybrid and rooftop solar, but these are not cost-effective options for us right now.

### **How long has [SPUR](#) had a Sustainable Development Policy Director? What are the key lessons that you have learned so far?**

I am lucky to be the first person to have this position, and I've been at SPUR for about two years. But SPUR is really a sustainable development organization, and we have been working for decades to make our city and region more sustainable through our work on housing, community planning, transportation, economic development, and good government. Sustainability shouldn't be viewed as a separate project from building a vibrant city.

There are two important lessons I have learned so far. One is, that the publication of a report is just the beginning of the campaign to fix something. SPUR's research is first-rate, but it is the education and advocacy parts of our work that really get the job done. Second, for any campaign to be successful, we need smart and actionable policy recommendations, and to get those, we need to engage a broad group of people to assess and solve the problem. SPUR is unique in this aspect. We don't just do our own research and writing: we engage insiders and outsiders in volunteer task forces, who come together to solve policy problems. It's not always a linear process, but it's always thoughtful. I guess that's a third lesson: this work requires patience!

### **What green authors and books do you hold up as beacons of truth and leadership in your business?**

For years I've appreciated the work of Paul Hawken and Amory Lovins, and [Andrew C. Revkin's investigative journalism](#) on environmental issues for the [New York Times](#). I like [Grist.org](#) for a roundup of environmental news, and the blog I think is most important today is Joe Romm's [Climateprogress.org](#).

**Do you see a major shift in the power of the USA as the banking, housing, climate and unemployment debacle hits home. What is your near term view of the future?**

Didn't those debacles hit home first? I take a fairly optimistic view of the future, but the short term is going to be rough for sure.

**Is sustainability like a new religion? How so?**

Interesting question. In my view, sustainability is not optional.

**Are you seeing [new symbols and stories in the green movement](#) that might be contributing to a new mythology of sustainability?**

We're starting to see that the urgency of stopping climate change is affecting business as usual. It's not a fringe issue anymore: it's a core priority for many organizations, businesses, and governments. And it's not just that we've got to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions (though that is #1 on the agenda), but that our history of producing them is already changing the climate today, and we'll have to adapt. In our lifetimes.

We are changing the very relationship of life and earth as we understand it, and we better figure out how to help the webs of life that support us adapt quickly - or we're all in deep trouble. I think more people are starting to realize this - that our current path is not a sustainable one for anybody - and the more that know, the more that can join the brain trust to figure out what to do.

**Who are recent partners at SPUR? What necessitates a partnership?**

SPUR is a member-supported nonprofit organization, so our very existence necessitates a partnership with our 4000 business and individual members. We also have a pretty dynamic network of partnerships or task forces that coalesce around specific policy issues we work on, such as transportation, or climate change adaptation. These usually involve smaller groups of members, expert volunteers, and city leaders, and last from a few months to a few years.

**How do you define green washing? How does SPUR address this?**

SPUR doesn't specifically work on green washing, but it's certainly a problem, so I hope the FTC does.

**What environmental justice issues is [SPUR](#) working on?**

One of the most important environmental justice issues that SPUR has been involved in is the effort to close the city's last remaining large gas-burning power plant. The plant is located in the city's environmental justice communities and for a long time, the City was trying to replace it with newer fossil fuel-burning power plants that would be located in the same neighborhood. SPUR got involved in a coalition that said the City could revise its energy reliability plan and invest instead in renewables and demand management. I think we are on the brink of victory, and the plant will be closing within a year.

**How does SPUR see the design changes for Market Street at this point?**

We are very excited about the city's willingness to experiment a little bit with Market Street, to try new things to make it a better street. Right now it doesn't work that well for private cars, let alone for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit vehicles. SPUR has believed for a long time that our city deserves and can support a grand boulevard, and Market Street has a lot of potential.

**What impact has [your report on cooling](#) made to date? Please explain to PlanetShifter.com why a 17 year old hanging out on Haight Street should care about cap and trade? Carbon tax?**

Our paper on how San Francisco should prioritize its climate actions has been very well received. Of course, it's been very helpful at shaping our own advocacy priorities on climate action. But what's been surprising is how many calls I've gotten about our impact analysis of many of the specific policies we considered, such as our emissions estimates for increasing ferry service, building HOT lanes, or building out the city's bike network.

Cap and trade and a carbon tax are just two different approaches to regulating emissions nationally. A 17 year old hanging out on Haight Street might not care about the arcane details of these policy tools, but ought to know that any policy, from the city to the federal level, comes with costs and benefits. The cost of not choosing one of these approaches is that we won't be reducing emissions anytime soon (let alone by 2020), and we'll be faced with even greater threats to our future well-being from sea level rise, fires, drought, disease, famine, and more. A 17 year old should be able to look down the road 20 or 30 years to realize that today's choices affect his or her own future. Having an informed opinion is the first step to making a better future. And frankly, it's essential to our democracy. That 17 year old is about to become a voter.

**When you call for the City to "leverage its participation in regional land use and transportation planning entities," the skeptics retort that the multi-level bureaucracies fighting for State tax dollars and land use control will never be in collaboration. Your insights?**

This isn't about fighting for tax dollars. It's really about taking advantage of an opportunity to reduce emissions throughout the Bay Area, and beyond just San Francisco. City officials, by way of their participation in the regional planning entities that shape our region's infrastructure investments and development patterns, should ensure that climate impacts are a part of the decision making. For example, the City has representatives on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, on Caltrain, on the Bay Conservation & Development Commission.

These agencies make important decisions about where we put roads, extend transit, and build housing for the 3 million people that will be moving here over the next 20 years. Smart land use planning - putting new housing and jobs in places where people don't have to drive as much - is one of the cheapest possible ways to reduce our region's future emissions.

**Laura Tam**

ltam at spur.org

## Steve Kilbey, Painter, Father and Songleader of The Church

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1346>

[Ideas to the world](#) and the existence of the dead vary from tribe to tribe but present nothing specially distinctive. The world is usually regarded as surrounded by water, sometimes as floating upon it. It is often secured by four or five pillars, ropes, or other supports. Beyond where earth and sky meet there is often another land. The dead sometimes go below, sometimes above, sometimes across the ocean to the west, and sometimes to more or less distant parts of this earth. The entrance to the world of the dead is pointed out by some tribes. People who have temporarily died have been there and returned to describe it. Dances constitute the principal occupation of the dead. No ideas of future rewards and punishments based on conduct in this life have yet been found. If such ideas exist they must be very scantily developed. As in other parts of the world, there are occasional ideas of transmigration of souls into animals, but these conceptions are nowhere systematically worked out or of a religious importance.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Your latest release: "Untitled #23" is best described to me as painting with sound. Your reaction to this?**

i like that description  
i like to make music at the point music and art meet up  
i like our music to suggest pictures and stories  
art and music can have similar processes of creation  
you start with a little thing  
and you build upon it  
you tinker with it  
a songwriter is a painter in words  
he suggests far more than he ever shows

**When the band collaborates with high spirit and merges into One force, where are you physically?**

i am in an anaesthetized place where there is no gravity  
my fingers become free and do what they will  
music becomes effortless  
we are swept up by some powerful wave  
the feeling is completely addictive  
and total release is rarely achieved  
still....

**"Metaphors are Steve Kilbey" – both sonic and via lyrics! Which ones have landed and enlightened you and your audiences to a higher consciousness recently?**

yoga makes the man  
theres a metaphor for your audience  
on our last tour of america  
i did yoga 2 sometimes 3 times a day  
people could feel my energy from it  
i ran around on stage for 2 n half hours and gave it everything  
and yoga made it possible for me to deliver that  
as for my lyrical metaphors....oh i can't think of any right now...!

**Do you write music – or paint - based on your dream experiences?**

no not usually

but i try to recapture the feeling of a dream in almost everything i do  
my own dreams are very blurry  
i try to get a certain blurriness into everything i do

### **What is your favorite instrument? How do you select electric or acoustic instruments for your compositions?**

my favorite instrument is the piano  
my compositions usually have a combination of electric n acoustic instruments  
one just gets a feel of where one wants what  
its an on the spot calculation rather than a general philosophy

### **Hero. Who are yours? Are you a hero?**

my artistic musical n literary heros were  
marc bolan david bowie salvador dali beatles stonies dylan rimbaud  
mervyn peake cs lewis jrr tolkien gustav klimpt neil young

i am probably someones musical hero yes  
to myself i'm just an old craftsman whos been doing it a while

### **What are the sounds from pre-history? Do you sample Nature? The City?**

oh the sounds from prehistory are pterodactyls screaming off in the warm evening distance  
the buzz of the jungle and the wind blowing across the steppes  
the monkeys chattering and the glaciers slow grind  
i have used samples of both nature and city in my songs

### **Is sustainability a form of religion?**

See: <http://www.planetshifter.com/node/359>

no i don't see how it can be a religion as such  
i mean we must cultivate sustainability religiously  
but it is not a religion in itself

### **What effects does commercial music and television have on our well-being?**

well not all commercial n television music is bad...tho most probably is  
therefore it would enervate the unhappy soul being bombarded with musical dross  
like looking at bad worthless art all day...you'd go kinda numb

### **Robyn Hitchcock told me that music is a form of alchemy – perhaps an invisible attempt to alter people's moods. Your reactions? See: Hitchcock Interview - <http://www.willipaul.com/rockmyth/rockmyth.html>**

yes it is alchemy  
you take all this improbable stuff...the wires n skins n strings n sticks etc  
and with correct manipulation by inspired players  
wonderful feelings can be obtained....like taking drugs but no side effects  
no one is really sure how its done  
no one can explain it....music...not the players or the listeners nor the musicologists  
in truth music is an impenetrable mystery  
oh yes..you can learn HOW it works...but never why....

### **What are some of the creative or spiritual initiations that you have went thru? Still working on?**

mainly time is what i went thru  
i was not a quick learner  
things took a long time to sink in  
against this i balance my curious naivete  
life n drugs n love taught me the blues  
but they also taught me to transcend  
i read the bible  
i read the gita  
i read the pali sutras of buddha  
i read fucking playboy  
i learnt to rocknroll somewhere in the last 45 years of playing  
it seems so easy but its hard to do things easy  
mainly i just persevered and i reaped times reward

**Many are talking about a major collapse in the world economy and a catastrophic period of anger and hunger. Do you see this near-term scenario? In not, what is your perception of the next 2-5 years on the planet?**

im just an artist  
i have no real valid thoughts on this subject  
as a parent of five children i hope this world endures  
tho humanity is a can of worms  
the earth would be much better off without us  
who can deny that?

**As a painter or musician, are you a Shaman? Are you painting about a new world?**

i wish i was a shaman  
i perform pseudo-shamanistic artistic feats sometimes  
but in truth i am a shrewd and intelligent manipulator of ideas n techniques  
unless i have completely fooled myself  
sometimes i get confused where its all coming from  
i would hate to have delusions of grandeur  
yes and no about the new world  
my worlds are alternate worlds  
neither newer or older  
much like ours but stranger and more improbably probable  
i'm trying to represent these other places/other things  
because.....  
because...  
i dont really know  
its just what i have been "told" to do

**Define myth per The Church, please. What myths are critical to your spirit these days?**

the name the church itself is all about myth  
i cant tell where myth ends and history begins  
i interpret everything on every level possible  
and i see all myths have truth and fiction  
and all history has truth and fiction  
and all my songs/paintings/words have truth and fiction  
the band has become legendary tho not yet quite mythical  
we are still men not myths

can you be a living myth?  
do you want to be a living myth?  
i still think about paris a lot  
paris prince of troy i mean...and the greek myths in general  
boy what a bunch of fucking characters!

**How do you think women's reverence for the sacred differs from men's?**

i believe women are more an even keel  
most of them have a reverence for the sacred  
whereas men tend to have higher peaks n lower troughs  
for example if you went up to random women and said "jesus" (for example)  
i think most would smile and say yes or no  
whereas with men youd get an extreme reaction...an atheist rant or  
a christian diatribe....

**Please give me your top three contemporary painters.**

vincent van go go  
sali dali  
gustav klimpt

**Do you have specific ways that you instill a love of creativity in your children? What art do they do with you?**

my kids are drawing n painting n singing all the time  
art has no boundaries in this household  
everybodys creating something all the time  
the kids just go for it  
and i offer my honest critiques of their stuff

\* \* \* \* \*

*So hard finding inspiration  
I knew you'd find me crying  
Tell those girls with rifles for minds  
That their jokes don't make me laugh  
They only make me feel like dying  
In an unguarded moment*

*So long, long between mirages  
I knew you'd find me drinking  
Tell those men with horses for hearts  
That their jibes don't make me bleed  
They only make me feel like shrinking  
In an unguarded moment*

*So deep, deep without a meaning  
I knew you'd find me leaving  
Tell those friends with cameras for eyes  
That their hands don't make me hang  
They only make me feel like breathing  
In an unguarded moment*

The Unguarded Moment , From Of Skins And Heart, The Church

**Steve Kilbey**

[The Church MySpace](#)

[Steve Kilbey MySpace](#)

[Karmic Hit Records](#)

[Paintings in pastel and gouache](#) (**Gallery Representation: Sydney, Australia**)

**Lisa Francioni, Project Manager**  
**California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance**  
**Environmental Affairs Coordinator, Wine Institute**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1355>

**How do you weave your sustainability message into the wider sphere, i.e. the near-by non-grape growers, residents and towns?**

The California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) implements the [Sustainable Winegrowing Program](#) (SWP), a voluntary, educational program for California's wineries and vineyards. CSWA's messaging is geared towards the California wine industry in order to increase participation in the program and to promote the adoption of sustainable practices. Most of CSWA's messaging for external audiences focuses on explaining the good work that wineries and vineyards are doing throughout the state. The SWP also promotes positive relationships with neighbors, and it's clear that many wineries and vineyards are helping to weave the sustainability message into their communications with these important stakeholders in the communities in which they operate.

**Who are your NPO, government and private partners?**

CSWA partners with many organizations in a number of ways. The development of the comprehensive [Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Self-Assessment Workbook](#), which is the foundation of the SWP, was completed with the help of many external stakeholder organizations. Partners also help deliver educational content at workshops on specific topics such as energy efficiency, ecosystems management, and integrated pest management, and many academic partners assist with important research projects, such as climate change mitigation. A few of our partners include Environmental Defense, Sustainable Conservation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Resource Conservation Districts, UC Davis, and many regional winegrape and wine associations. We also receive government and foundation grants to support our program, and have received funding for specific grant projects from the US Department of Food and Agriculture, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, among others. See the [full list of partners](#).

**What are the primary resisters in your work at the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance?**

CSWA's work on the Sustainable Winegrowing Program benefits the environment, wine quality, workers and communities in winegrowing regions. Luckily, we do not get many resisters to such positive work.

**Tell us about the educational program you created? What model(s) did you utilize? How do you evaluate the results?**

The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices Self-Assessment workbook was released in 2002 and is based on several successful regional efforts including a workbook from the Lodi Winegrape Commission and the [Central Coast Vineyard Team's Positive Points System](#). The vineyard chapters of the workbook are modeled specifically on the viticulture chapters of the Lodi workbook, and a Joint Committee of 50 winegrape growers and vintners refined these chapters to apply to the entire state and developed additional chapters to cover winery operations. There are 14 chapters in the workbook covering everything from ground to glass, including ecosystem management, vineyard water management, pest management, winery water management, solid waste management, air quality, human resources and neighbors and communities, among others. Vintners and growers use the workbook to self-assess their practices in each of the 14 chapters and receive customized reports to see how they compare to others in the state (and to also region and similar size operations for vineyards). SWP participants use these reports to see where improvements can be made, and set action plans to help implement changes. They reassess after changes are made and start the process again. We refer to this as the "Cycle of Continuous Improvement" and it is the cornerstone of the program. We publicly report on the aggregate self-assessment data of the industry in statewide reports (when we did so in 2004 it was the first time an entire industry reported this type of sustainability information). We released a 2004 report, a 2006 progress report and will be releasing a 2009 report in January. See [reports](#).

## **What are your credentials as a certification expert? What training have you completed?**

CSWA, along with the SWP Joint Committee (comprised of over 50 winegrape growers and vintners made up of members of Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers), the CSWA Board of Directors and certification consulting experts, are developing a third-party certification component to the SWP to help complete the "Cycle of Continuous Improvement." The certification program will require the creation of action plans, implementation of changes and reassessment on an annual basis. The certification is expected to be complete by the beginning of 2010. The group involved in the development of certification combines experience and training in viticulture and enology and involvement in the development and/or implementation of existing certification programs (e.g. Lodi Rules and the Central Coast's SIP-certified, as well as ISO 14000, organic and biodynamic certification). The third-party auditors will have experience in certification, as well as training specific to the California sustainable winegrowing certification program. See [information on certifications](#).

## **How do you define green washing?**

Green washing is the act of purposefully misleading consumers regarding the environmental and/or sustainability practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service, and it is something that everyone who is truly committed to sustainability tries to steer clear of. Green washing, and the threat of external stakeholders criticizing any sustainability program or initiative, is one of the reasons it has taken CSWA eight years to develop a certification program that can be communicated to outside audiences. The California wine industry wanted to be sure we were truly "walking the talk" before we brought sustainability messaging outside the industry. It was mainly due to the market and regulatory climate that the industry decided it was time to take begin talking to a wider audience about what wineries and vineyards are doing on a day to day basis in regards to sustainability. Many decisions made in the development of the certification program were intended to avoid any perception of green washing.

## **How do you define localization?**

While CSWA recognizes that buying local is an important part of sustainability for the many benefits it creates by limiting emissions and fuel use from travel, keeping money in the local economy and supporting the community, we do not have any official definition of localization. Another important aspect of localization is knowledge of where products come from and how they are produced. We hope that consumers recognize that environmental stewardship and social responsibility are among the many reasons they should consider enjoying California wine.

## **Do you see sustainability as a religion?**

Sustainability means a lot of different things to different people. CSWA defines sustainable winegrowing using the 3 E's (Environmentally sound, socially equitable and economically feasible) – which are growing and winemaking practices that are sensitive to the environment (Environmentally Sound), responsive to the needs and interests of society-at-large (Socially Equitable), and are economically feasible to implement and maintain (Economically Feasible). Sustainability is both a way of life and an efficient way to run a business for many in the wine industry.

## **Is it difficult to measure eco-footprint out in the countryside? What are the primary and secondary pollution sources?**

CSWA is engaged in several projects to help wineries and vineyards measure their carbon footprints. Wine Institute and international partners released a Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool and Protocol in 2008 for the free use by anyone in the wine industry worldwide. CSWA has also worked with researchers to undergo an extensive literature review on climate change and vineyards to help target areas where more research is needed to determine the carbon footprint of wine. Because of the diversity and size of winery and vineyards in regions throughout the state, it is difficult to pinpoint primary and secondary pollution sources. This is why the Code addresses a comprehensive set of issues related to sustainability, to help individual wineries and vineyards identify their most significant impacts and ways in which they can improve.

## **What happens at your assessment workshops?**

All California winery and vineyard owners and employees that attend a self-assessment workshop receive a free copy of the sustainable winegrowing workbook. CSWA provides an overview of the program and instructs vintners and growers how to use the online self-assessment system before having the workshop participants complete the assessment right there. By doing the assessment in a workshop environment, participants are able to ask questions and engage in dialogue with their neighbors about practices. CSWA hosts workshops throughout the state and this year began hosting online webinars, on the last Thursday of each month, to make the workshop available to anyone regardless of location.

## **How do you monetize sustainable practices?**

While there are endless case studies on the financial benefits of sustainable winegrowing practices and using resources efficiently, monetizing practices is one of the areas CSWA would like to focus on in the near future. CSWA recently completed an interview survey of 100 winegrape growers and many of the respondent's cited sustainable practices such as monitoring for pests and disease, and using cover crops as being "cost-effective practices". Read the [survey report](#). Luckily, the business case for sustainability is starting to become more and more obvious, especially as people hear about the savings from neighbors at meetings, workshops and in communications materials.

**Lisa Francioni**

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## **Dennis William Hauck Author, Lecturer and Alchemist**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1371>

**“The principle goal of alchemy is transformation via manifestation of intention, and the chance that materialization will actually occur is directly proportional to the quality of expression.” Please put this into layman’s terms!**

The alchemists consider consciousness a force of nature that is an essential ingredient in their experiments. By projecting a pure and focused intent the alchemists believed that the outcome of their experiments could be altered. Thus the "quality of expression" depends on the purity and focus of the alchemist's consciousness. It is an idea that is currently recognized by modern physics as the so-called "observer effect" in quantum physics and other emerging ideas on the mind of nature.

**“Alchemery takes change out of the hands of politicians and back into the control of an enlightened populace.” Is there a political component to the transformational power of alchemy? How can alchemists reach a wider audience?**

There has always been a political or social component to alchemy. In fact, our founding fathers were very familiar with alchemical principles and openly tried to apply them to the new democracy, and there was much debate about how far they should go. Benjamin Franklin and the great French philosopher Rousseau even wrote a constitution for America based on the [Emerald Tablet](#). Alchemy is about the universal methods of transformation and perfection that apply to all aspects of human activity.

**Can television serve as a source of alchemic training or transformation?**

Absolutely. I have worked with teams from television and film production companies as a consultant on how to connect the archetypal power of alchemical principles to screenwriting. Most of the applications are subtle and do not mention alchemy, but producers and directors are familiar with Jung's perspectives on the power of alchemy in people's unconscious and that is the level at which they want to connect with audiences. On the other hand, there are some shows that openly use genuine alchemy principles, such as (surprisingly) the anime series "Full Metal Alchemist" or films like the [Harry Potter](#) series.

**Is alchemy taught in US public schools now? How should it be taught?**

Although a few Rudolph Steiner schools do teach alchemy, it is generally taught privately by alchemists. There is a [correspondence program](#) covering both practical and spiritual alchemy offered by the [Alchemy Guild](#).

**Did the American Native Indian use alchemy?**

Surprisingly, yes. It is a kind of instinctive recognition of alchemical truths that uses their own terminology, and in general, their kind of alchemy is spiritual based and does not focus on the metals. Many tribes, including the Sioux, Hopi, and Apache have their own terms for First Matter, the four elements, the Quintessence, etc. Also, the mythic qualities ascribed to [animals](#) are almost always in line with alchemical symbolism.

**What is the major difference between Christianity, Witch Craft and Alchemy?**

Alchemy and witchcraft are close cousins on different paths. Both pay close attention to nature, herbs, planetary energies, the elements, etc. Some see witchcraft as the feminine approach and alchemy as the masculine approach to the same tradition. The history of alchemy and Christianity is closely intertwined, and historians have shown that the roots of their common philosophy go back to Egypt. The Church of the Middle Ages was very wary of alchemy competing for the hearts and soul of mankind and persecuted many alchemists for voicing such beliefs as a person could contact God in the privacy of their own prayer and meditation at home. There is a whole tradition of Christian Alchemy based on the idea of Christ as Lapis ([Philosopher's Stone](#)) that is part of the mystical Christian tradition and can be seen in the writings of alchemists like [Jacob Boehme](#) and organizations like the [Rosicrucians](#).

## **How do science and alchemy intersect, clash or support each other these days?**

The cutting edge of science, especially quantum physics and astrophysics, actually complement the alchemical view of nature very well. Psychology pays homage to alchemy on many different levels, and many psychologists actually recognize alchemical operations as effective tools in therapy. Chemistry is actually the worst fit to alchemy, as it arose out of a late tradition in alchemy known as the "puffers", so called because they work primarily with high heat and spent hours frantically pushing bellows trying reach high temperature. Their approach was materialistic and they work purely physical, and they were interested only in making gold for wealth. Kind of like some modern chemists seeking to create the next golden drug at pharmaceutical companies.

## **How would you ignite the power of the [Golden Chain of Homer](#) in an Oakland, CA ghetto neighborhood?**

Ha! Great question. I would go there and give the best lectures and workshops on alchemy I could possibly present. I would make sure every word connected with the audience at their level and exposed the alchemical truths in their lives and how transformation is possible only if it begins with one person. As the alchemists said, it takes a seed of gold to make gold. The Golden Chain of Homer is actually a chemical text with a strong spiritual symbolism and talks about the outer fire that ignites the inner fire. In the lab this is demonstrated by the ignition of metals or the way catalysts speed up processes. It is the grosser crackling temporary fire that ignites the purer most brilliant and focused inextinguishable flame. In people, it is the words of inspiration and truth that ring true in them and ignite an intense burning/yearning for truth that burns away all the dross and lies in their lives and makes them passionately true to their own inner essences.

## **How can the use of alchemy create a sustainable environment locally and globally?**

The alchemists called themselves philosophers of fire, which was their code word for pure energy. In their work, they attempted to free the deepest energetic essences of things and purify them to the level at which they became empowered, embodied, and perfected. Inefficiency and waster were the dark forces in their experiments that they sought to separate out to bring their processes to new levels of full expression. This is the idealized view of any environmentalist - to create the purest energy with the least waste. The alchemist's [Ouroboros symbol](#) (serpent or dragon eating its own tail in a circle of endless transformation) was how they expressed this idea of the eternal recycling of the whole universe. From their love of nature, I think the ancient alchemists would be at the forefront of environment efforts both locally and globally. They gave us the whole secret to a sustainable environment in their universal operations of how to transform one thing into another.

## **Is sustainability like a religion?**

It does have a religious feel to it for some people. I think it is the idea of being in balance with the earth and cosmic laws that makes sustainability have this spiritual connotation to it. Of course, the alchemists all the way back to Egypt would have insisted it be treated as a spiritual quest. They saw Nature as the one great truth to which we have direct access, and revered her and tried to server her. They were and remain primarily Philosophers of Nature.

## **What are the time-tested Alchemical principals? How does it produce abundance and wealth?**

There are seven major operations in alchemy that include about a dozen different techniques. But overall, the Great Work goes through three stages. The first is the Black Phase, in which the substance or situation at hand is reduced to its essences, and all the dross and extraneous material is removed by burning or dissolving in liquids. The next is the White Phase, in which the surviving essences are purified to the point where they become "innocent" again and true to their divine signature. During the final Red Phase, these isolated essences are combined in to one thing that is reborn on a new level of empowerment.

## **Is the organic food movement a form of alchemy?**

The organic and raw food movements are certainly part of modern alchemy, and you will see several speakers and vendors promoting this idea at the [Alchemy Conference](#) this year.

**“Be a part of the growing movement whereby ancient spirituality is infusing itself into Pop Culture to create change on a global level.” Can you give us three examples of this please? Are you speaking to the Green Movement here?**

This growing movement is so powerful in modern alchemy that it has been given its own name - "Alchemergy." Alchemergy is about the merging of ancient spiritual traditions and methods and their emergence in modern popular culture. Alchemy is no longer a secret discipline for a small band of reclusive practitioners but an open secret that is finding acceptance in totally new areas. These include the Green Movement, conscious eating and living groups, animal and nature preservation groups, spiritual movements, transformation of business and government, and many personal transformation groups. It is based on social networking and action. The Guild even opened up a new website devoted entirely to this concept at [Alchemergy.net](http://Alchemergy.net) with a kind of MySpace for alchemists at [Alchemergy.com](http://Alchemergy.com).

**Is the sustainability focus now unfolding an example of [distillation](#)?**

Absolutely. Distillation in alchemy is the repeated purification of a material until it reaches perfection. In the lab, it is the boiling and repeated condensation of a liquid until the purest concentration is achieved. In personal and social alchemy, it is simply learning from experience and pushing oneself and one's commitments to higher levels. We know the mistakes we are making in the environment and we know we cannot continue the mass excess consumption we have grown used to. We were not aware of this just 50 years ago. Now it is in the popular consciousness and that is the first distillation. The next successful distillation will purify that realization into the Red Phase of empowerment and action.

**How do you reveal and engage your purified and empowered consciousness in a work shop setting ? At the grocery store?**

You stay true to your own empowered essence. You do not compromise from the new vision you have distilled in your personal consciousness. You speak and act in accordance with this new understanding until it becomes real. Every decision you make at home, at work, shopping, or just mingling with people has to come from the purified and empowered consciousness you are giving birth to.

**Is there evil and good in the alchemy that you experience?**

I do not believe in good and evil. I think they are very anthropomorphic labels that only confuse people. I do believe in powers of light and darkness or what we might call "positive and negative" energies, although in the end, they are all part of the same One Thing. The alchemical symbol for this idea is the Oroboros or the serpent/dragon eating its own tail. This circular process is a natural cycle of destruction and creation that is the engine that drives the universe. It is similar to the Tai Chi symbol of yin (darkness) and yang (light) and their constant changing into one another. The alchemists believed that the universe constantly feeds on itself and each Oroboric cycle was part of the gradual spiral of perfection. All we can do is understand and try to live in accord with this natural process. That is the Great Work of the universe in which the alchemists sought to participate.

## Francesca Genco, Berkeley Performance Artist and Body Healer

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1378>

**[Robyn Hitchcock](#) told me that music is a form of alchemy – perhaps an invisible attempt to alter people’s moods. Your reactions?**

Alchemy is the ancient practice of transmutation – of base metals into gold and silver and of the physical body into the “light body” or immortal body. I do believe that music and sound transmute energy by creating a vibrational field that affects the mind and body. One’s mood and state of mind/body is affected not only by experiencing direct associations with the qualities of the music and/or lyrics, but by the actual vibrational patterns created by the music.

**Do you write music based on your dreams?**

I haven’t written any songs with a specific storyline from a dream. However, I feel a lot of my music comes from a deep place in the collective unconscious, which is expressed not only in my dreams, but also in the dreams of others. This is, in part, the role of the artist – to creatively express experiences and archetypes that are deep within the cultural and global psyche.

**Hero. Define yours? Are you a hero?**

Any being who is acting from a place of deep listening and compassion is a hero/ine to me. Service to the whole, coming from a place of knowing oneself as a true expression of the whole, is heroic. It’s also heroic to fail over and over again to act in this way, but continue to find one’s way back to this place of awareness of the possibility of acting from true nature. Actually, that’s more heroic than being that way all the time! Am I a heroine, given this definition? Absolutely! I’m constantly falling off the horse and getting back on. My horse and I do a great dance together.

**What are the sounds from pre-history? Do you sample nature?**

Sounds whose existence precede our ability to record them often have a primal power to move us in ways we don’t cognitively understand. The human heart beat, wind in the pines, water lapping at the shore or running down a mountainside – these are all sounds that have a deep affect on the limbic brain. They connect us to our ancestry. There are ancient sounds we haven’t even heard yet. We’re still honing our ability to tune in to deeper levels of acoustic consciousness.

I haven’t yet directly sampled sounds from nature for any of my pieces. However, I love to sing outside of the studio and am planning to record and perform in naturally resonant chambers (such as caves) in the near future.

**What is Gaia? Do we see / hear this force in the eastside of East Oakland?**

Gaia is the World Soul, the Divine Mother Earth in all her beauty, rage and compassion. No part of this planet is excluded from this! Some humans have (un)consciously tried to subdue this World Soul in service of ego, but still she shines, even (and perhaps especially) in places like East Oakland. Gaia dances with those who know her name and there are many gathered all over the planet that do, in cities, suburbs and rural lands alike.

**“In the realm of psychoacoustics, the terms music, sound, frequency, and vibration are essentially interchangeable, because they are different approximations of the same essence.” What is this essence? How does this force heal? (see PS.com interview Event Circle with [Dréa Drury](#))**

The essence is Love. Not love in the realm of the personal/emotional, but as the “isness” or “suchness” of all things, as the Zen masters would say. Experiencing Love as the essence and ground of all being is the most powerful healing. It leads us to re-member our wholeness.

**How does the transformative effect of intoned sutras work? Does one need to be initiated in some way to benefit?**

Chanting sutras, or scriptures, is a way to embody the wisdom that lies therein. The words themselves hold a kind of power. The repetition of the sutras can be transformative. One can literally absorb the energy of the words as they are chanted over and over again. It is also a way to honor the wisdom of the sutras. If one has studied the meanings of the sutras and is "initiated" into the practices connected with them (e.g., sitting meditation), the practitioner often will experience their power at a deeper level. However, it is entirely possible for spontaneous transformations to occur when chanting sutras, for initiated and uninitiated alike.

### **What is a Chanting & Sound Healing Circle? Is this based on ancient formula?**

Sometimes I call these circles Spirit Singing Circles, as my friend and sister dancer/singer, [Jacqueline Parsons](#), coined them. They are, in fact, just that. We come together to celebrate and collaborate with our voices and our listening. Most of the chants are in [Sanskrit](#) and invoke the names and qualities of various Hindu and Buddhist deities (e.g., Tara as the expression of Universal Compassion).

However, we also include chants from other cultures/languages and chants that are spontaneously created in the moment. When one chants and also receives the vibrations of the chanting of others, this can be deeply healing. We also place a "healing blanket" in the center of the circle, where people can lie down for a few minutes if they are so called. [Kimba Theurich](#), who sings with me and plays the didgeridoo, often plays the didgeridoo directly over the body of the person lying on the blanket. The deep resonance of this ancient instrument is transformative. What I offer with the Spirit Singing Circles is based on the ancient and modern practice of coming together to listen and respond to one another through song. We sing the blood and bones of our lives, both as individuals and as the endless web of community.

### **Why are you a [contralto](#) ( type of classical female singing voice with a vocal range somewhere between a tenor and a mezzo-soprano)?!**

I've never been officially dubbed as a contralto before! I actually don't specifically identify within a particular vocal range, as I can sing most soprano, alto and some tenor parts. However, my range does fall most strongly within the alto.

### **Is there only one way to engage the chakras? Or, are there stimuli and reactions on via multiple channels? How do you do it?**

There are many ways to engage the chakras, or energy centers, in the body. Meditating on the qualities of the chakras, chanting the Sanskrit sounds of the chakras and visualizing them in the body are a few ways to engage them.

### **Is your call and response circle like the caller at a country barn dance or a poet ranting at a slam?**

Neither! As I explained in my description of the circles above, it's more of a collaboration. However, I do lead the chants, meaning I begin them and see where they go as others bring in their voices and ways of creatively expressing within the chant.

### **Are you a Green woman? How does your spirituality weave sustainability, music and politics?**

Well, I am half Italian, which gives my skin a sort of olive hue. :) My connection with Gaia and Nature has always been of primary importance to me. I spend a lot of time in the hills behind Berkeley, walking, listening, smelling and looking. What I offer through music is a direct result of my relationship with Gaia and my love for Her. I hope to bring others on this journey with me, as they re-member their direct connection with Gaia, perhaps on an unconscious level, through the songs/sounds. This, for me, is a political act. It is contributing to a paradigm shift that must happen on all levels, including in how we engage politically, socially and individually with one another.

### **Do you see sustainability as a new religion?**

If by "religion" you mean a set of beliefs that guide behavior, yes.

**What organizations to you belong to?**

I am connected with many circles/organizations, including the [Green Music Network](#), the Contact Improvisation community and BNI (Business Network International).

**What the range of outcomes that can result from a Song of the Body [workshop](#)? How can participants extend this healing on their own?**

Participants in Singing the Body workshops often leave with much more freedom and confidence around expressing themselves vocally, both with singing and speaking. They have a clearer sense of how they can relate to and engage their bodies as exquisitely designed instruments, connecting movement (on subtle and broader levels) to the qualities of the sounds they make. Playing with how to improvise vocally is also central to the workshops. We delve into how to consciously use these skills to effect healing in oneself and others through the voice. Many participants have said they feel a greater sense of joy in singing/sounding and moving as a result of taking the workshops.

**Francesca Genco**

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[songofthebody.com](http://songofthebody.com)

[magnatune.com](http://magnatune.com)

## **Alan Tower, Composer, Founder of Green Music Network**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1389>

Alan Tower has created a didjeridu duo album unlike anything else available musically, as well as being created in service to the indigenous peoples of the world, bearing witness to the earth's vanishing ethnosphere. He is seeking a record label for this project that connects with the intention behind it, and the didjeridu as a sacred ancient and modern instrument used in a compositional way while spotlighting these amazing musicians and their contributions.

LISTEN NOW: [A Shaman's Spiritwork](#)

### **What makes the Green Music Network a "Network?"**

Well one thing is in our newsletters we promote other musicians concerts and related artistic endeavors who are in this loosely based community/network. We connect artists with each other and connect people from one realm of interest – resonance based music with another e.g. Kirtan. A membership program has not surfaced in our work yet. It could, but we see our work as community based grass roots – with concerts held in the homes of hosts who sponsor our event, as well as yoga studios and one therapist's office gathering space. We do have two larger venues we program, the amazing Hawk Hill Tunnel as part of the Cave Concert series and the gorgeous UCSF conference center we partner with. Some people say it's working. We are hiring two staff this week so to enable growth. As the leader I am more a musician composer and so not particularly skilled in how to grow an organization.

### **How many active members do you have and what collaboration occurs online?**

Again, no members per se but that might change as we expand. We use Facebook under the name Natural Resonance. What we are about is direct experiences of resonance for shifting consciousness – transformation through sound - so our mode is generally not primarily electronic interface for collaboration, other than for connecting with others and using it as a tool for developing something together that ends up as direct experiences of resonance. We have about 3,000 on our mailing list and developing partnerships regularly with other orgs to mutually benefit our missions.

### **Can anyone show up and gig at your events?**

Now that is a cool question. Not as of yet. It sparks some ideas that we have never explored. This is because our focus is on instruments and the sound of resonance, rather than focusing on the western equal tempered tuning system (plenty of musicians and advocates there!) This approach takes a certain musicianship around a direction not as common, keeping to a small community the musicians and groups we present. That could change as well but not real likely.

### **Sonically, a cave is a highly reverbative place, an often cold space. Are you "playing" in the past Alan? Why?**

Another way cool question. Let's see, hmmm . . . highly reverberant yes, but when you put 300 people in there the reverb almost disappears due to the bodies absorbing the sound waves between ceiling and floor. Over the past 7 years it has been cold, warm and medium temp but I think you mean in the area of feeling. Our lighting designer, John Coveney has evolved it to the point the cave is gorgeous and has a very warm ancient feeling - see [photos](#).

The Hawk Hill Tunnel past is about preparation for war. It was designed as a pass through so the big gun turrets could be in position to fire 7 miles out to sea at the Japanese. We have transformed it with sound such that people have had experiences of oneness, experiences of being the water in their own bodies. It has evolved, mostly on its own (we just started putting language to it) as "an environment that calls forth being". Similar in a way to what, in my view, is at the core intention of Burning Man. When you arrive at Burning Man what you hear is "welcome home". Coming into the cave has that feeling for some.

**It would seem at first look that The Resonant Body Chamber must have some values and structure. All art is judged. The is a kind of creative anarchy then? How do you know when it starts and stops Alan?!**

This question seems to be borne out of not experiencing what RBE is yet. It's an experience of entering a river of resonance, producing resonance in your own body. It's not about ideas or concepts. This is what it is in a nutshell:

Singing long tones over a drone in our acoustic chamber your body will have a direct experience of natural resonance. It's fun, fulfilling and there are countless directions the practice can take us. The Resonant Body System is a reliable method for remembering who we truly are. The experiences can become a guide for living life with more freedom, in the present, more open to the mystery and to each other. It also provides a pathway to the holy grail for musicians for knowing where we are, through hearing & playing in tune.

"Once our physical body tastes the nectar of natural resonance, a crack begins to open for an experience of resonance with all life . . . of being source of our own life . . . of being source of the life of others."

**Robyn Hitchcock told me that music is a [form of alchemy](#) – perhaps an invisible attempt to alter people's moods. Your reactions?**

Sounds right to me. All form comes from a secret code embedded in vibration. Everything is in ever constant movement, vibration every moment. Alexander Lauterwasser, another hero, is a scientist mystic showing how visually, physically - this is coming about every moment of creation. He does this through the casting of sound waves (in the beginning was The Word) upon water (the most primordial substance of life) . . . what is created are truly gorgeous Mandela, fractal like images, Leopard spots, Turtle shells et al. Our world of form in other words.

There is no competing scientific theory for how our worldly forms come into being. We(I) am about resonance as a way of life because it's at the core of our world, ourselves and how we came to be. What would our world be without sound, music? Mood alteration for sure as you mention. But that's just one vector of so many. Dréa Drury's response to this same question in one of your previous interviews is just wonderful, insightful and with great heart.

**Do you write and/or experience music based on your dreams?**

No. Mark Deutsch is the one talk about that with. He is a master dream journey guy. The idea for the Bazantar came through a dream. One of the most astonishing instruments and musicians of this millennium.

His level of sound architecture is akin to the creativity and inspiration of Gaudi, the architect most inspired by organic natural form in the history of that discipline.

**Hero. Define yours? Are you a hero?**

For me a hero is someone who is so deeply in service that whatever his or her form of work or creativity is, it comes from that place. There is power both in the art, and being in service - this intersection. A hero has an obvious awareness of the larger picture. [Malcolm Gladwell](#) is a hero of mine. Peter Gabriel another. Andy Goldsworthy in a different way. Brian Swimme, Allaudin Mathieu, Ken Wilber, my wife Nika.

I really hope I am a hero for some in the world, and I want them to be hero's for others who become hero's for others. It's like when I learned about my "default intention" (what is the core intention driving ones actions in the world?) from another hero of mine, Anurag Gupta, of The Difference Engine business group?) It is often hidden from us. Turns out it was "Do the right thing for safety, or just for its own sake". 50 years of this dissolved away as I became aware of it and he then had me develop my "sourceful intention" as a new way of being, in its place. Source is his term for the great mystery, god, the essence of existence. Over time my "sourceful intention" evolved to, "Leave'em lit up . . . to their own light . . . as Source itself, to light up others"

That's a long roundabout to the beginning thought about hoping for hero's who become hero's who become hero's for others in a ever widening spiral. Or it could be viewed as a mobius strip reconnecting back on itself as an energy form in the world.

## **What are the sounds from pre-history? Do you sample nature?**

Interesting odd sort of question here. The sounds of creation, the birds, wind, the trees predate human awareness of course. We came along and were the first species to shiver with wonder at this symphony. The first humans created sound probably for curiosity, beauty, or just because it was possible. These sounds were probably hard objects being hit together, the human voice, the Australian dreamtime sound of the [Yidaki](#) (didjeridu), the flute made of bone just discovered a few months ago maybe 35,000 years old. Pretty cool stuff. I don't sample if you mean as in the electronic process accessed through keyboard or computer.

The hero I mentioned before, Anurag Gupta, is a force of nature. I was saying goodbye after a retreat and "Thanks for being a force of nature" just spontaneously popped out of my mouth. So we see nature as this creative force in our lives, and some let that drift to the background amidst our busy urban lives, while others can't live without wild things.

My sampling of nature takes place in finding and developing new instruments out of burnt earth (clay huaca), agave/carbon fiber stalks (didjeridu's), the resonance of a unique nitrogen fixated metal chamber called the Hang, and in creating an acoustic chamber for folks to sing low prime ratios tones (we do this cosmologically intuitively, neurologically), over a Shruti Box drone.

## **What is Gaia? Do we see/hear this force in the eastside of East Oakland?**

James Lovelock proposed this hypothesis which became a theory . . . an integral being, a living earth that exhibits fundamentally what we know, from both a scientific and ancient cultural wisdom that everything is connected as one whole . . . "Nothing is itself without everything else" ([Brian Swimme](#)).

In 1983 I wrote a guitar piece called Gaia using a cool resonant open tuning basing it on Lovelock's initial work. The playing style I learned from Michael Hedges, two hand independent tapping. My life and music were transformed to an ecological perspective with Lovelock's work, and further through that of a Miriam Teresa MacGillis talk called, The Fate of Earth.

At the quantum level "entanglement" is a truly astonishing principle that is accepted as hard science but many scientists just try to ignore it, as it's so bizarre and not of this world, not of our direct experience. But there it is, shimmering its beauty, beckoning us to enter, for a transformation of consciousness. No, the eastside is one of just a few places that . . . just kidding.

**"In the realm of psychoacoustics, the terms music, sound, frequency, and vibration are essentially interchangeable, because they are different approximations of the same essence." What is this essence? How does this force heal?**

(PS.com interview Event Circle with [Dréa Drury](#), Music is the most extroverted form of this vibrational essence you mention. We are vibration itself. We are the secret brought to consciousness.

## **How does the transformative effect of intoned sutras work? Does one need to be initiated in some way to benefit?**

Not in my experience. I lead [Kirtan](#) and write Kirtan sutras and have had only one camp with Jai Uttal and just a year or so of immersion in the Bhakti world. It's all about intention. Mark Deutsch taught me that one initially. Bhakti is a window into Source. Singing to source as source is what it's about. The myths and stories behind the words are wonderful - the trials and tribulations of Krishna, Ram, Sita, Hanuman et al carry with them an ancient lineage of intention, connection and also reflect our human condition.

That's why we organize a monthly Kirtan series cause it's the other side of the Natural Resonance coin (sound on one side which is its own story and experience), and on the other the warmth of the human heart through Hindi words and myths – an experience through singing in community as one to the Divine, as the Divine itself.

**Is there only one way to engage the chakras? Or, are there stimuli and reactions on via multiple channels? How do you do it?**

I don't do it. I don't know much about chakras. So far I apprehend chakra as a label. My two current teachers Allaudin Mathieu and Mark Deutsch have spent lots of time getting me to understand that the names of things do not provide inherent meaning or understanding. We think we know something more about something when we give it a name. Of course I have great respect for anyone working with intention to facilitate wholeness of experience. It's just not my approach, chakras. I want to create environments that call forth being through creating ways that people can produce resonance themselves in their own bodies. Developing or inventing tools for this is my passion. The less I need to say or refer to names the better. The SoundStone of Klaus and [Hannes Fessman](#) is my next major focus and will be a part of the Resonance Institute. Also playing these instruments of resonance for people in concert settings is the love I bring.

**I explained to [Steve Kilbey](#) of the Church that their new release is like "painting with sound." Feedback on this?**

That's interesting. No feedback comes to mind right now.

**Are you a Green Man? How does your spirituality weave sustainability, music and politics?**

I think the answer comes about in some of the previous responses. I once had a scent created specifically for me back in the 90's by an artist whose life was about creating essences – aromatherapy it was called at the time. It came to me in the mail and the title of the potion was Green Man!

**Do you see sustainability as a new religion?**

No, not really. Both of those words, those concepts, I don't think will continue to resonate on a deep level as our species evolves (unless it can't anymore because the lungs of Gaia can't breathe, or the blood of Gaia can't support fish, unless Gaia just can't support us anymore). To me "sustainability" is a not so interesting general word, what might it even be in real terms? The Sun becomes a red giant in 5 billion years. The Earth then vaporizes. It's got half of its life to go and then we go. Nothing is truly sustainable, though the term has been a quite useful concept.

I remember telling a bunch of recreation professionals (I used to be one) at a conference talk in the late 80's to keep their eye on this new notion of "sustainability". They had not come across this at the time. I said it was going to be the key concept of our modern age. Well I think it has been a very useful one for a time, but may have seen its day. There is something out there, I don't have a clue what it is, that is deeper with more life power that will supplant sustainability as a idea form to catalyze a generation. Bring it on. Religion, oh sheesh, that would take a few more pages.

I am launching a group to develop a physical space, A Resonance Institute - for research, workshops and concerts. The vision behind it is:

**Where science, art, earth and spirit meet for direct experiences of resonance as a way of life**

If I had one, I guess the above would my religion. I hope lots of amazing people join me.

**Alan Tower**

[Green Music Network](#)

Alan Tower [Solo Web Site](#)

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## **Laura Allen, Greywater Action**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1400>

### **You started this vision trek back in 1999 with a back yard grey water system. How has the technology changed since then?**

When I first started doing greywater systems it was about empowerment and shifting how I'd been accustomed to interacting with water in my house to take control and turn this "wastewater" into a resource. It was a time of experimentation, personally figuring out how greywater works and what I could do with it.

After living with greywater systems for many years, I began to see what aspects of the systems took a lot of maintenance, what parts of the design caused system failures, and what parts worked well. Over time I built more and simpler systems, relying more on nature to do the work, and less on human involvement. I found that the simplest systems, designed to not need filtration or pumps, worked very well and were long lasting. I also began focusing on what I could grow with greywater, looked at the best food producing plants that thrived on greywater.

For the high tech systems, there have been advancements on the more mechanized systems that filter and pump greywater. What some people want, and some companies claim to deliver is a "plug and play" system, one that will work for anyone, anywhere, and is easy to install. Almost all the companies selling "greywater systems" are only a few years old, so it will take more time to see if their systems work over the long term. I also think it's important to consider the embodied energy and electricity used in more complex systems and question the overall benefit and environmental impact they have.

### **How is the definition and public perception concerning grey water changing?**

From my perspective there is more interest in greywater now than ten years ago. People recognize their used shower water can be beneficial to their landscapes, and the awareness is growing that we can't continue wasting and polluting water the way we've done in the past. Our relationship to water must change, and greywater is a piece of that transformation.

### **What are the current institutional barriers to sustainable water use?**

Many sustainable water use practices are not allowed under current codes. This is changing, but slowly. Arizona is a good state to look at for forward thinking policies. They made simple greywater systems legal in 2001, and places like Tucson will be requiring greywater and rainwater harvesting for future construction. It's important to be active on multiple levels, first modeling safe and sustainable practices in our homes, sharing what works with our local agencies, and advocating for local and state policy changes. California has recently changed its greywater code to make it friendlier to residential greywater reuse and made simple systems legal, some without requiring any permits at all.

### **What can the typical Bay Area single family residence do to re-use their grey water?**

Conservation is always the most ecological place to start when seeking to reuse water. After that, greywater from the washing machine is usually the easiest place to access greywater, a system can be built without altering the drainage plumbing. It can be used to irrigate trees, bushes, vines, and other large perennial plants. Showers are another great source, though accessing the plumbing can be more complex.

### **What are the best places to get a workshop?**

[greywateraction.org](http://greywateraction.org) offers a one day, hands-on workshops, about once a month. They are posted on [greywateraction.org](http://greywateraction.org). We have just begun offering a five day training program for people who want to install greywater systems as part of their business.

**Laura Allen, Co-Founder**

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## **Eric Roston, Author: The Carbon Age**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1404>

### **What is your cause? Has it changed since the release of The Carbon Age?**

I'm not sure I have a cause in the advocacy sense. Climate change is so complicated that I believe the global community in general, and the rich nations in particular, have a responsibility to reduce emissions and deforestation as rapidly as they can bear it (actually, more rapidly than they can bear it). But the thing I'm a real advocate for, the thing that I lose sleep over, is a public discourse degraded by imprecision, selective facts, and at worst, lying and disinformation. I'm a strong believer in transparency in public speech -- journalism, political rhetoric, or otherwise. This hasn't changed since the publication of *The Carbon Age*. In fact, I probably think about it more. Having gone through as many sources as I did, I'm always curious what everyone else's sources are. They're not always easy to find.

### **How has your book and messages impacted your parents (or other seniors in your network)?**

My Dad read, I think, every page of every draft generated over three years. He didn't have a natural interest in the material. And in fact, I just think he was more curious about how someone would go about writing a book, and wanted to peer over my shoulder. My Mom took on a higher awareness of the issue. I think my work sensitized them to the issue, and probably gave it greater dimension.

I worked with many senior scientists in the US and abroad. Their support and encouragement made the book possible. I was very grateful that they saw promise in the basic premise. Many talked about their children and grandchildren, and the concern they had about climate risk.

### **What does "[localize](#)" mean to you? Any examples?**

It's been encouraging to see such interest toward "living locally," particularly when it comes to food and communities that allow people to work a short distance from home. [Colin Beavan \("No Impact Man"\)](#) told me about research he was reading, I think by University of Virginia's, showing that the factor causing American parents unhappiness, in comparison with European parents, is the amount the former spend in cars.

### **What Age will your daughter live in? Do you think she will be tolerate a "personal emissions allowance?"**

I hope it will be the Age of Wisdom, in which we have made good decisions that lead to sustainable use of the resources that make life and modernity possible. As [Franny Armstrong's](#) recent film argues, if not, the alternative is that our time will be remembered as the "Age of Stupid."

### **Are you suggesting a major paradigm shift in values in the USA? If so, please describe this shift.**

It's not a major paradigm shift in values. It's a major paradigm shift in adherence to the values that we already have. Every religious faith that I know of worships the natural world and creation. It's past time for us to treat nature--and by extension, others around the world, and generations to come--according to the principles we already have and generally think we adhere to.

### **Do you see any unity of green action in your professional circle? Neighborhood? City?**

We're seeing enormous action in the US in abroad. The scientists advise us to get moving very, very quickly on climate policy. That deadline overshadows the fact that as far as major legislative initiatives go, the climate effort has come together pretty quickly. For a decade now, there's been a lot of activity on the state and local levels. In Washington, DC, we already have a pretty low carbon footprint, compared to many Americans, because communities are walkable, and there are lots of cyclists.

### **How do you personally live the green life?**

I've pretty much devoted my career to finding ways to nudge "the system" toward action on climate change. I work for

the [Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions](#) at Duke University. We're nonpartisan, and charged with helping all players in the climate debate find equitable and productive solutions to these complicated issues. Communication plays a role in climate solutions, and I enjoy being able to make scientific, policy, economics, and technology material available to audiences that might not otherwise reach for it.

Personally, I've always been a very urban person, walking to work and the stores, and not flying much. And there's always, much, much more we can do.

### **What are some of the sustainability-related values that are important for human evolution ahead?**

I think you've put your finger on it in the earlier question about living locally, to the extent possible. We also need to ask ourselves hard questions about the amount we consume, and what we consume. Consumption is the driving factor of all of this. There's a Buddhist idea that you should "want what you have," not what you don't have. We could use a dose of that.

### **[Is sustainability a new religion?](#)**

No, I prefer not to see it as religion. Our understanding of climate change is really driven by data, scientific data. It's driven by evidence collection and logical reasoning. Continued scientific observation will help inform how we should react to climate change. But I fear that invoking a new religion is too far away from the scientific data. Science really requires a flexible mind, as we assimilate ever-increasing amounts of data. It's the opposite of dogma.

### **What stories and myths are critical to understanding the carbon age?**

Although I don't think sustainability is a religion, our traditional religions have much to inform us about how to manage carbon. We're all supposed to "tend the garden." If we really lived by that admonishment, we'd be a long way toward solving the problem. I also think there's a lot to be gained from the symbol [Uroboros](#), the snake that consumes and reproduces itself. The material of life cycles around the Earth system, always creating new life from the same, old material. That's a great metaphor to keep in mind in the carbon age.

### **Did you [uncover new cultural symbols](#) by writing this book?**

Uroboros isn't new, but I liked that one. The [Uroboros myth](#) has special meaning for carbon, because of the role [August Kekule](#), the German 19th century chemist, said it had in his major discoveries.

I really fell for the Ginkgo tree. [Ginkgo biloba](#) is one of the oldest existing trees, at least 120 million years old. It has survived meteor strikes, hot and cold climates, and millions of other hardships. It's surviving, in fact prospering, in the industrial age, because it's a beautiful tree and it's useful to humans. This is chapter five of *The Carbon Age*. There is so much that *Ginkgo biloba* is able to tell us. I hope we'll all continue to listen. Ginkgo is underexploited as a cultural symbol. Kor Kwant has done a wonderful job building a shrine to it at the [Ginkgo pages](#).

### **Do you use [LinkedIn.com](#)? If so, please critique it for us.**

I have a Linked In account, but I almost never use the site. I'll look at it when things settle down here.

### **How do we get people out of their cars, Eric?**

I've joked that the "car of the future" is a bus. Americans like their cars, mostly and unfortunately, many of our cities were designed with them in mind. In Washington, DC, the traffic problem has gotten so out of hand that urban planners are thinking about putting in (thankfully!) street trolleys again, modern ones. I see a lot of people who claim to love their cars, but hate driving an hour to and from work. What's so great about a car culture that traps us in metal boxes 2 hours a day? As people see the benefit of better alternatives, I hope that will make a difference.

## **How do you characterize the next version of capitalism as it relates to energy sources and energy consumption?**

Capitalism is ever-evolving. The next phase of capitalism is the best solution we have to the current phase of capitalism. The global economy is slowly shifting its incentive structure so that polluting sources of energy will be more expensive. We're seeing a huge influx of capital into energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. Once the market sees that there are suddenly all kinds of new ways to create value -- people in the market tend to go out and create more value than anyone ever imagined might be there!

## **What online communities do you use? What makes one better than another?**

see: <http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1383>

[Grist.org](http://Grist.org) -- This is a wonderful news and analysis site, funny and smart.

[WorldChanging.org](http://WorldChanging.org) -- This upbeat, informative site is a thought center on the Internet for sustainable living.

[Complusalliance.org](http://Complusalliance.org) -- I recently spent a month in India and became acquainted with the leadership of this association of journalists interested in sustainable living, and the role journalists and communicators play in it.

## **Eric Roston**

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## **Miguel Elliott, Living Earth Structures, Petaluma, CA**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1409>

**Say I just purchased a small estate in Southern Sonoma County and the place is run over with neglect due to a long bank foreclosure. Why should I hire you? What are your strategies to create holistic spaces?**

Well, I have knack for transforming spaces into exciting earthen wonderlands. I can round out corners, arch doorways, sculpt trees on the walls, build in little niches, apply clay plasters, making the space look like something right out of the hobbit. It will make you feel wonderful inside. I can also build you a bed or a bench built out of earth which has a rocket stove pipe running through it so you can sleep on a heated surface. I can bring your backyard to life by building an earthen wood fired oven and benches around it, which can serve as an outdoor fireplace and an oven which can bake a pizza in just 2 minutes and stays hot for 12 hours for baking bread the next morning. These structures are excellent for attracting community, since everybody loves the whole experience of cooking in a wood fired oven.

**Is sustainability like a religion?**

Interesting question, I have never considered that before, but in a way, yes it is. There are certain practices which you follow because you have a belief that this is a good thing to do for the Earth. Just as religious people believe that if they read the Bible, go to Church, and pray, that they will be sent to Heaven, followers of a sustainable lifestyle believe that the Earth will be healthier if they adhere to certain principles.

**What symbols (and myths) are you incorporating into your offerings. Are you creating new ones?**

Each of my [projects](#) has a different theme to fit the setting. In the nightclub I built in Chicago, called the Butterfly Social Club, I created a Mayan themed atmosphere, with Mayan Warrior and Goddess benches, Quetzal & Serpents, Pyramids, and Mayan glyphs. I have done a lot with the Eagle and Condor theme. In Guatemala, I built a restaurant for a Mayan woman and called it "Los Abrazos" because there was an eagle and a condor connected, with ovens in their bellies, and you could sit inside of their hugs. In short, according to ancient indigenous belief, the Eagle represents civilizations which are materialistic and economically oriented, while the condor represents civilizations which are more spiritually oriented, connected to indigenous wisdom, and are more nature based. An ancient prophesy declares that these two forces of the North and South are now merging, which is saving the world from destruction. I have used this concept to shape much of my intentions for doing natural building work. Other symbols I have used a lot are spirals, suns, OM symbols, hearts, trees, and galactic butterflies, which is also a Mayan Symbol for the orientation of consciousness- the intersection of time/space/divine will and personal intent.

**Many see a dramatic near future for the planet. What is your vision for the next 2-5 years**

Well, I touched upon it earlier with the discussion of the eagle and the condor prophesy, with indigenous wisdom merging with technological realms which is creating balance on the earth. I don't believe the Earth will be destroyed in 2012. The Mayans called it the "End of Time" which implies the end to limitations and restrictions. Time is measured as form, and in a few years this structure will break down. How? I'm not sure, but I am excited to see what unfolds. We will be entering into an era where so much more is possible, where we can co-create our realities, where peace prevails, and people live much more from their hearts, and the feminine energy comes forward more and more. We have much to look forward to-more communities, more natural building, more bikes, more people growing their own food, healthier food, happier people and more fun. Bring it on! I envision much more emphasis on self/community reliance and much less on depending on the "system" to provide for us. I see a massive consciousness shift happening on the planet, where fixed paradigms fade away and creative ways blossom.

**Do you connect your design to a spiritual plane?**

Absolutely. My most common design is an [oven](#), with 2 benches wrapped around, so you feel like you are sitting inside of a hug of Mother Earth, Pachamama, while you are being warmed by the fire. All of my designs are rounded and curvy which is pleasant to the senses. Being surrounded by the Earth element is also incredibly healing for the body and soul.

There is a lot of scientific evidence and my own personal experience that knows that having your body in direct contact with the earth will ground you and make you a more balanced person.

When your feet are barefoot on the Earth, you are receiving electrons, which balances your body's pH level, reduces inflammation, absorbs toxins, elevates the mood, calms the mind. and dose much more to make us happier, healthier and whole human beings.. When we insulate ourselves from the Earth it causes many disturbances and a disconnection from what is real. In the process of building out of cob, you and your friends dance in the mud, which can be lots of fun and you are putting your positive energy into the building material, which can then be felt on a subtle level in the structure. I have done a few ovens in the shape of a large happy Buddha, where you cook inside of Buddhas belly, which you just can't help but feel good around it. Other designs I have done have been Goddesses, the Sun, trees, and nature based themes.

### **What is the difference between ecology and sustainability? Between residential and landscape design?**

I think of Ecology as being part of the macrocosm and sustainability is part of the microcosm. If we each live a lifestyle that is oriented towards making conscious choices of what will be the healthiest for the planet, then this will go towards contributing to ecological healing. Residential design attempts to bring the sense of the outdoors- inside, with sculpting trees, doing earthen plasters, and softening the edges, while my landscape design usually involves bringing the nice aspects of the indoors-outside, through sculpting benches, ovens, and garden walls.

### **How are you involved with Daily Acts? How would you like to see the organization grow?**

I lead a natural building workshop this summer with [Daily Acts](#) in the backyard of its director, Trathen Heckman in Petaluma. In the 2 day workshop, we had about 15 people come and learn to build an oven and bench using earth right on site. For the backs of the benches, we used adobe bricks which I had made at an earlier workshop 2 weeks earlier. On the second day of the workshop we plastered the structure using an earthen plaster, and then we fired up the oven, which was very exciting, for it was instant gratification.

Next year, we are planning on doing a tour of all the cob/adobe ovens in the area which I have been built, and their owners will fire up the ovens and make pizzas. Maybe we will throw in the competition element in there for whoever can make the best tasting pizza. I participated in the national day of service which Daily Acts helped organize in which we converted over 25000 sq feet of water needy lawn into a low water landscape. It was a pretty incredible day, with over 250 volunteers. It made me proud to be an American again. It would be nice to see Daily Acts serve as a model for other budding organizations around the world who can be inspired by this work, and follow a similar format.

### **Are you involved in any social justice projects?**

This summer I was working with a group of 20 Latino youth who were affiliated with gangs in Santa Rosa. I taught them some basic natural building skills, such as making adobe bricks, making small house models, and we built an oven together. They were so thrilled when they saw the pizza cook in just 2 minutes in an oven which they helped make. When I finished with the school I hired a few of the boys to work with me in some of my natural building projects. My side job is doing music at homes for the elderly, and giving them an opportunity to feel the cob and do some basic sculpting with clay.

### **Tell us about the history of cob/adobe construction and how you have evolved this art?**

I was introduced to adobe construction at an early age when I visited [General Vallejos adobe fortress](#) in my hometown of Petaluma. I was always particularly fascinated with the big adobe ovens there and remember thinking how much I would like to build one someday. Now I've built over 20, and I've got lots more to build. Adobe construction and earth building is the most common form of building material in the world- especially in Africa, India, the Middle East, and China, where the majority of people live in earthen homes. Adobe was very popular in California with the building of the Early missions which used Native American labor to make and set the bricks. Many of those early missions are still standing today after nearly 200 years . Cob construction originated in Wales over 500 years ago, and was introduced to

the States in the early 90's by a Welsh builder named Ianto Evans who started the [Cob Cottage Company](#) in Oregon. Since then, thousands of people have learned cob through workshops, and there are natural building colloquiums each year where people exchange their successes and failures in their work. It is also a chance for the tribe to gather and get support from other natural builders.

Most of the natural building work is done in rural areas where building inspectors are not an issue, with the exception of Portland Oregon, where there are many cob structures built right in the City. I have evolved the art by bringing natural building into spaces such as a nightclub, a yoga studio, restaurants, and have built benches right on sidewalks in downtown Chicago. I don't know of another builder who has done as much work in a big city as much as I have. I also go to about every festival as I can with my mobile oven I call the "Chariot of Fire" to expose the general public to the wonders of cob. My style is unique, in that I use a linseed oil as a sealer, which makes it very shiny, and I often add mica which gives it a glitter effect. I also use adobe bricks a lot in my bench structures, which allows me to get the project done very quick, opposed to doing it with cob, which can take weeks. I have had good media exposure with my work, being featured on ABC News, and various newspaper articles. I have started a business called Living [Living Earth Structures](#) which specializes in building cob/adobe ovens, benches and saunas. I have discovered that you can make a pretty good living as a natural builder, as I have been targeting high income bracket clients at winery's and other businesses. In a way I guess you could say I have merged the Eagle energy of financial orientation with the condor orientation of community building, and earth honoring practices.

**Please describe what you mean by "Earthen Wonderland." What teachers have helped you gain this view?**

When I was living in Chicago, I was able to work year round-even in the heart of the freezing winters, because I would work on transforming square, drywall conventional structures into earthy, rounded, curvy and sensual spaces which would make you feel like you were in a magical earthen wonderland, where anything felt possible. I would sculpt trees on the walls, large butterflies with lights and mosaic mirrors, cob candle holders, heated cob benches, meditation domes, cob shelves and nooks, eagle and condors sculpted over the doorways, and would put LOTS of crystals into the cob. People coming into the spaces I created in Chicago would marvel at the difference they felt upon entering the spaces I created, being surrounded by the healing Earth element -indoors in a city dominated by cement, electro-magnetic fields and pollution.

I have yet to do interior work here in California yet, as I have only been back here for a year, but this winter I will be building a movie set down in Big Sur for a fictional movie being filmed about a Native American grandmother, and the producer wants me to create one of my magical earthen wonderlands in the space. I have had many teachers who have helped me develop my craft. My first workshop I ever did was down in Argentina, building a Waldorf kindergarden school lead by Janell Kapoor of [Kleiwerts](#), who I will always credit with being my first cob teacher, since then I have learned about the cob ovens largely from [Kiko Denzer](#) out of Oregon. Much of my work though feels as if it is channeled through some presence much higher than me. When I finish a project I rarely have the feeling that I was the builder, as I credit Spirit as the sculptor, I am merely the body the Spirit moves through. It is a very humbling sensation, which makes me appreciate being used in this way.

**Who is your favorite painter?**

Being a sculptor, I actually don't get very excited about painters, but I did have a favorite, I would have to say [Salvador Dali](#) - My college dorm room was covered with all of his wacky psychedelic paintings. I could see sculpting one of his melting horses out of cob.

**Miguel Elliott**

[Living Earth Structures](#)

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2010

## **Robert Dombrowski, bioplastics. Nanoview Associates LLC**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1445>

There are several main classes of Biodegradable plastics that are used in applications at this time. These classes of materials are:

- Biodegradable – breakdown by microbes / bacteria
- Compostable – these plastics can be placed in compost conditions to breakdown without interfering with the production of usable compost.
- Hydro-biodegradable – these plastics breakdown in the presence of water.
- Photo-biodegradable – these plastics breakdown when exposed to ultraviolet light / sunlight.
- Bioerodable – these materials erode or breakdown when placed in the body – they are usually used in biomedical implants. Biodegradation occurs only if all fragmented plastic residues are consumed by microorganisms as food and are used as their energy source. The theoretical final breakdown products in biodegradation being carbon dioxide, water and cell biomass.

### **What are bioplastics? What material(s) came before these?**

Bioplastics are polymeric materials (polymer – material composed of molecules containing long chains whose backbones contain carbon atoms) derived from renewable biomass sources rather than from petroleum. Examples of these biomass sources are polymerized soybean oil, starches (corn, potato, tapioca, etc.), seaweed & bacterial fermentation of agricultural waste. Not all

bioplastics are designed to biodegrade. Even though the existence of many bioplastics have been known for many years, until recently most consumer & industrial packaging were made of polymeric materials derived from petroleum (i.e. polyethylene & polypropylene). These petroleum derived materials do not degrade or biodegrade or they do so at extremely slow rates in the environment.

### **Describe how naturally occurring microorganism such as bacterial, fungi and algae provide the engine for degradation?**

The bacteria, fungi and algae use the carbon based chains in the biodegradable materials as food & sources of energy. Most bioplastics contain polymer chains that are composed of “sugar-like” units which are “ideal” food & energy sources. The polymer chains are consumed by an array of natural chemical reactions within the various organisms.

### **How do you see the impact of carbon in the degradation process? Are you calculating this impact in a footprint assessment?**

I am not aware of any extensive scientific studies of how biodegradation impacts the carbon footprint of packaging in the solid waste stream. I imagine that the use of bioplastics is some - what carbon neutral. Example: Agricultural feedstock – production of bioplastics – composting – growth of more agricultural feedstock. It seems that this can be looked at as a “carbon neutral” packaging production – usage – composting loop. The only other question would be how to “collect” or “harvest” the carbon dioxide produced by future municipal level composting facilities for useful purposes.

### **In simple terms, discuss the role of sunlight and water in the breakdown of plastics.**

Sunlight and water help promote the biodegradation of most biodegradable packaging. Both factors promote hydrolytic, oxidative & enzymatic reactions that break susceptible linkages in the polymer chains of the packaging material which reduces the average molecular weights of the polymer chains. Below a certain molecular weight bacteria start to consume the material &

the material loses its mechanical properties resulting in degradation to polymer fragments. Complete biodegradation occurs if all fragmented residues are consumed by microorganisms as food & their energy source. The ideal biodegradation end products would be carbon dioxide, water & cell biomass.

Sunlight / ultraviolet light is even more of an important factor in the degradation of what are termed "Oxo-biodegradable" materials. These materials are usually petroleum based polymers that contain metal based catalysts that are activated by sunlight / ultraviolet light. Once these catalysts are activated they start chain cleavage reactions that reduce the chain molecular weights & this reduction in molecular weight eventually leads to bacterial consumption & biodegradation. There are many potential environmental problems with the use of these Oxobiodegradable materials over bioplastics.

### **Define "environmentally friendly."**

My definition of environmentally friendly with respect to the biodegradation of bioplastics based packaging is that the degradation process will have no detrimental effects on the environment – no toxic breakdown products including the non-production of fine polymer dusts, total degradation to carbon dioxide, water & cell biomass (all natural components) & production of high grade compost for landscaping & agricultural production.

### **What are some of your recent successes in nanostructural analysis and productization?**

In recent years I have been involved with the micro / nanostructural characterization of Nanobiomaterials at the Medical Device Concept Laboratory - New Jersey Institute of Technology (Newark, New Jersey). These Nano-biomaterials are used in the production of electrospun bioerodable scaffolds (similar to non-woven fabrics) that are meant to be implanted into the human body. The ability of the structures produced to bioerode is critical to allow the scaffolds to incorporate into the human body with minimal immune response.

The scaffolds are produced by spraying a liquid polymer stream into an electric field resulting in the production of fibers with diameters on the nano level. The resulting scaffolds are then seeded with stem cells to produce semi-natural human body component replacements. The initial goal was to produce replacement spinal discs.

Much micro / nano characterization is needed to produce structure – property models that help explain to researchers how the materials perform in the desired final applications. This way material compositions & manufacturing processes can be adjusted to produce materials / structures that will have the desired final performance properties in the body. The micro / nano characterization studies are carried out using analytical polarized light microscopy (PLM), laser scanning confocal microscopy (LSCM), field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM) & Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM).

### **Do you work with bioreactor technology? How do you scale-up your processes?**

I do not directly work with bioreactor technology in my Biodegradable / Bioerodable Materials consultancy practice at Nanoview Associates LLC. There are classes of biodegradable materials that are produced using bioreactor technology. One of these biopolymers is poly-3-hydroxybutyrate (PHB) - member of a broader class of biopolymers called polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHAs). PHB is a polyester produced by certain bacteria processing glucose or starch. Its characteristics are similar to those of the petroleum derived polypropylene.

In the 1980s & early 1990s the British company Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) developed a process that used bacteria genetically modified to produce PHB within their cells. The PHB production process was carried out through fermentation in bioreactors. The resulting classes of commercial materials were sold under the tradename of Biopol. In 1993, ICI transferred its biological division to Zeneca which continued to develop the PHAs under the Biopol tradename. Zeneca then sold its Biopol assets to Monsanto in the mid 1990s. In 2001, an American company, Metabolix, Inc. acquired the Biopol assets from Monsanto. Metabolix is developing trans-genic approaches to the large scale manufacture of PHAs through fermentation & agricultural biotechnology.

With all the mergers & takeovers that have occurred in the Specialty Chemical & Biotechnology industries over the last several decades the Biopol tech transfer saga is not uncommon. Hopefully, good & sound "Green" materials technologies eventually winds up in the right organizations that will see their potential & effectively carry out their commercialization & promote their wide spread usage.

**Please critique the current landfill or recycling operation in the US. What needs to improve in terms of disposal and degradation of plastics?**

Today the majority of solid waste is buried in landfills. Not much degrades effectively in modern landfills & a large amount of methane is produced. There have been studies in which they excavated decades old newspapers out of landfills that could still be read today. The environmental benefits of biodegradable packaging are not realized in the landfill environment – the bioplastics based packaging is entombed.

To fully utilize the environmental benefits of biodegradable packaging we need to develop a municipal level composting infrastructure. This idea is not new – when I was Research Associate / Head of Microstructural Characterization at Novon Products (Morris Plains, New Jersey) in the early 1990s I served as a member of a Biodegradable Packaging Consortium comprised of members from industry, academia, the Federal government, the military & NGOs that explored such an idea. We had a test municipal composting facility in Haddonfield, New Jersey where biodegradable starch based / starch – known biodegradable synthetic blends produced by Novon Products were placed in compost to monitor their biodegradation. Municipal level composting based on state-of-the-art technology I feel is the future for reaping the maximum environmental & societal benefits of using bioplastics based biodegradable packaging in the solid waste stream.

**NOTE: Novon Products was Warner Lambert's (now Pfizer) effort to produce biodegradable starch based / starch – known biodegradable synthetic blends for \$Billion Consumer Packaging & Medical Consumables markets.**

**Robert Dombrowski, Email Communiqué –**

"I have been involved with Biodegradable materials - packaging since the early 1990's. At that time I was Research Associate / Head of Microstructural Characterization for Novon Products. Novon Products was Warner Lambert's (now Pfizer) effort to produce biodegradable starch based materials / starch - know biodegradable synthetic blends for \$Billion Packaging & Medical Consumables markets. I have continued this work since that time - I have extensive knowledge of Biodegradable Materials Science, Characteriztion, Degradation / Biodegradation Mechanisms, Materials / Biodegradation Testing, Post Consumer Processing / Handling - Breakdown Fates & Policy.

I am the President / Principal Scientist of Nanoview Associates (NVA) LLC NVA is a Scientific / Technical Consultancy with a very large portfolio of advanced areas of consultancy expertise & services - main expertise areas: Biodegradable Materials / Packaging & NanoBiotechnology."

**Robert T Dombrowski, President / Principal Scientist**

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## Peter Asmus International Green Writer and Space Debris Guitarist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1446>

*"I just packed up a U-Haul and headed to California without a job and a handful of prayers. My first paid employment was writing arts reviews for The Davis Enterprise. Then I sold ads and served as an editor for **Winds of Change**, a funky "underground" monthly that included the famed Robert Crumb as staff cartoonist." [PA](#)*

### **Green is rapidly becoming a commercial blurr in the media and the global mind; a clique? How do you keep the sustainability movement fresh and focused for your readers?**

It is true that "green" has become super-hyped. That's both good and bad. Good, in the sense that advocates such as myself have to spend less time building the case for going green, and instead have to focus more on practical implementation steps. Bad in the sense that now everyone says they are "green," so that for many citizens, the competing claims on concepts such as "sustainable" can indeed become a blurr.

I try to stay fresh by constantly challenging my own beliefs on what is green and what is not, and being open to new ideas and technologies and more radical approaches. I don't believe that technology is a God, but rather an enabler.

Best approach to public education is to site local examples, success stories where benefits to the environment and economy can be verified.

### **Who are the key enemies of green change in America?**

I prefer not to use "enemies" because I think all segments of society -- including government and business -- can be a part of the solution. But, if I look at what has happened in Washington, DC with federal climate bills, you can see that the status quo special interests can still block even the best intentions of folks, such as President Obama.

Nuclear power and coal companies should not be getting any government subsidies, especially in these times of budget deficits. Copenhagen was also a major disappointment. Perhaps the biggest enemy of green is society's tendency to not embrace the inevitability of radical change. The old ways are dying, and it is time for those enlightened to force a new paradigm over the next decade.

### **What are the top five causes in the green youth movement as you see them?**

The top five causes are:

- global climate change;
- linking environmental progress with the need to address pressing social issues such as poverty in the developing world;
- the availability of clean and safe fresh water;
- deforestation and the destruction of natural biodiversity in farms and ranches;
- the health of oceans, the last frontier for food and energy sources.

### **What metrics are you using to measure the impact / effectiveness of your work?**

I'm not a numbers person. I judge my success by feedback I get from people reading my articles, listening to my radio show on [KWMR](#) and in simple conversations at events and get togethers. Sure, I can track traffic on my website, and also see how successful I can be when placing articles in the corporate media as a free lancer. I limit my own carbon footprint in a variety of ways, including telecommuting, biking and walking, and always purchase products rated green by organizations that I trust.

### **Tell us about your creative tools for global/personal transformation?**

My global tools include writing spiritual poetry that connects my with nature, often on my hikes throughout Mount Tamalpais and throughout the Point Reyes National Seashore. I also write music about the need to switch to renewable energy -- with one song title being "Clean Power -- Right Now." I also have rituals and shamanic tools such as a drum and Tibetan Bowl. To me, just being in nature inspires and sustains me, and fills me with hope that we humans can indeed transform ourselves -- even if it takes a major crisis to wake up and be fully present.

**We made it!! The Green Movement is a success!! What do you see now in your home town, Peter?**

I've worked as a community organizer and helped several community centers and public agencies out here in West Marin switch to solar energy. I've been networking with local growers of organic foods, and helping them educate themselves and the greater community about new concepts of energy self-sufficiency, such as "microgrids," a "Solar Safety Net" and "community wind and solar." To me, the green movement is growing, but I would not yet declare it a success. There are still many frustrated citizens wanting the tools to do more, and looking outside for help. We can each do quite a bit in our own backyards, but we need government and progressive businesses to work with us to make the kinds of wide-scale changes necessary to save the planet.

**What new stories, symbols and myths are you creating / using in your life and writing?**

The new stories I use are inspired by the natural world. I am an avid bird watcher, and to me, the ability of birds to sing and express themselves through song is fascinating. I have also spent a lot of time analyzing my dreams, and finding my own personal symbols of both failure and success. With my music, I love to improvise and feed off of the energy that other people I'm playing with bring to the table. In short, I like to serve as a catalyst, not beholden to any one ideology or movement or organization, but rather, slipping in and out of different projects and groups, trying to stir the pot, and encourage people to maximize their skills and talent on behalf of mother earth.

Most of my published work is in the non-fiction and policy/political realm. My goal in the near future is to focus more on my creative side and use poetry, song and various spiritual rituals to spark change, linking art with purpose -- and finding ways to share and create community during these times of vast and often scary changes.

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## Trathen Heckman, Executive Director of DailyActs.org

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1450>

**WP:** “Your voice / story / collaboration is much needed now. You and I need to dig deep and find new ideas! I thank you again for your time and vision. But I want to stress that getting you out of your comfort zone or expertise is important to me and you! I wish to know the Tra beyond the day to day at [Daily Acts](#) Cool?”

**TH:** “Sounds great Willi. I’m all for the stretches. Though with as much distraction is alive in the world (even grand green distraction), I think it important that we each be clear on where the stretches are beneficial to our purpose and the bigger picture!”

(December 2009 email exchange)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Green is rapidly becoming a commercial blurr in the media and the global mind; a clique? How do you keep the sustainability movement fresh and focused for Daily Acts and others in your circle?**

People take up green for a lot of different reasons and it’s important to develop a good filter for what’s authentic and truly of benefit versus what’s just more noisy, shiny crap and distractions. That said, I think regardless of the reason people start something, be it for ego or altruism, it can change you. The more you show up and make consistent efforts to care for people and planet, something inside you begins to shift.

You start to connect to a larger purpose and become less concerned with selfish outcomes. And how sad is that? Given the truth and science of our connectedness, that we think we are being “selfish” when we make unconscious choices to benefit our own little single serving sack of hominid saline that we call me. Ha!

As for how we keep it fresh and focused, it’s just about showing up with reverence in your heart and one question in your mind - “how do I/we make something amazing of the materials and the moment?” What is the greatest potential that I/we can live? We keep it fresh by surrounding ourselves with people and examples that amaze and inspire us. We keep it focused by not getting lost in fear, but feeling the fire of the urgency of our planetary situation. Through conscious design, good practices and habits, it gets easier to pattern into our lives, landscapes and organizations that which keeps us on path.

### **How have you re-defined localization since you started Daily Acts? What are the top 5 criteria you would deploy in a brand new town plan?**

I wouldn’t say that I’ve re-defined localization. Though as sustainability culture grows, changes and takes root, it has made me more open to possibility, nuance and unexpected partners. It’s not just about organic, but local, small-scale, healthy relationships and unexpected allies who maybe aren’t organic. For us local is more about household and community self reliance. It’s about the 100 foot diet of what’s growing out your front door and the fair trade that is grown thousands of miles away but takes care of the local family and culture of where it comes from.

As for top 5 criteria for a new town plan? Not sure about that one but here’s a few thoughts. FIRST it must follow nature’s primary organizing principle – nature creates conditions conducive to life. It should be regenerative in nature and be patterned after ecosystem function – food forest landscapes, wetland waste water treatment and such like that. It should integrate art and ecology and honor the land and its indigenous past. It should be water-wise by design to slow, sink and spread rain and stormwater and as [Brock Dolman](#) would say, inspire a reverential rehydration revolution!

### **Are you bored, over-whelmed with or crazy-insane about “climate change” these days?**

None of the above. Humbled by the scale of the challenge and consequences, inspired by the planet-wide grassroots mobilization, focused by the timeframe - the most important decade humanity has faced to reduce emissions 80%. This

is what is being called for by the latest science and leaders such as [Lester Brown](#), the [State of the World Forum](#) and a growing cadre calling for true climate leadership.

**What are you meditating on in the garden these days? How do you relax?**

Being a couple days past the winter solstice, sacred closure to another cycle around the sun is what has my attention. For all the challenges, this life is such a gift. So I'm drawing in to marinate on this and of course visioning how we are going to take it up 10 notches in 2010 from a place of balanced service that includes time to garden, tend my lovely wife, our bees, chickens and neighborly relations.

As for relaxation, I have a quiver of practices such as my morning meditation and trips to the sauna. I garden, journal, read, make beer, snuggle our cats and Mary. Time in nature always soothes and astounds.

**It looks like MySpace is hot in your youth media-dominated world. How do you critique this tool? What are your preferred social networking sites?**

Noooo idea. I'm more old school. Nature's tech is my thing. Though we have some eco-web stars like [Jaimey Walking Bear](#) who tweets and keeps our [Facebook](#) well-tended.

**Who are the key enemies of green change in America?**

Be it the garden or green movement, I tend not to see things in terms of pests and enemies. That said, more than any group or individual, the issues are ignorance, fear, ego and unconsciousness. How else could we kill our rivers, our forests, our people, our self unless we've forgotten the truth of who we are? When we let ourselves get framed by how we are oppressed, or what is wrong that someone else is doing or doing to us, we give away our power and our ability to lead with how we live.

**What are the top five causes in the green youth movement as you see them?**

I'm not sure, but climate change is definitely up there. Sustainable agriculture and food growing has a lot of energy as well. Definitely social justice and green job issues. There's 3 biggies.

**What new stories, symbols and myths are you creating / using in Daily Acts? How do the old ones get in your way?**

As for new stories, it's about focusing on the world being born while carefully navigating the world that is dying and coming undone. The language of **"the Great Turning and the Great Unraveling"** is a compelling story. For Daily Acts, our symbol is the immense power of the humble daily action, the immense fertility and healing power of the homegrown solution taken to scale. We use nature's wisdom, the language and metaphors of Permaculture by planting "food forests" which is an edible landscape that mimics a forest ecology. We've done this from backyards to city parks to [Petaluma City Hall's front lawn](#).

The old story that gets in our way is that of dis-empowerment and disconnection. Because people feel small and disconnected and that their acts don't matter, they lose connection to the immense power and wisdom of nature which can guide and heal so effectively and richly. By living from and relating to a whole person, whole planet paradigm, our potential is limitless.

**What is important to your kids and teachers at the intersection of arts and sustainability? Please illustrate with experiences from Daily Acts.**

The smell, touch and taste of the world being born. It's not just about hearing about sustainability, but bringing them on a tour of a backyard ecosystem and cracking open their paradigm as to what is possible. It's feeding them edible flower petals and honey from the hive as the chickens and ducks roam about and they eat exotic berries, standing in the cooling shade of an edible ecosystem. We take students and teachers to living, breathing models in communities.

We help them plant neighborhood ecosystems. One high school student Ben, helped us plant a 3,000 square foot forest garden at the [Cavanaugh Center in Petaluma](#) as part of a water conservation project we did with the City. After that he took a Permaculture course and was blown away. He sent me a nice letter about how much it shifted his perspective and path. Just as it did for me when I got exposed to a fecund landscape of healthy relations.

### **What metrics are you using to measure the impact / effectiveness of Daily Acts and your other work?**

Measuring how we spend our time is a critical practice for effectiveness. It also honors the thousands of volunteer hours we receive which is an important measure as well. Of course financial outcomes. We measure the number of citizens we educate, the partners and leaders we inspire and support. Through feedback forms we measure our impact on people who attend our programs. For our work with municipalities we are measuring the water savings with landscape transformations.

There are several households in [Daily Acts Project Homegrown](#) which measure all our inputs and outputs from food grown, to species diversity to garbage, recycling, water and energy use, all to get a full cost assessment and show how rich we can live and how much benefit we can generate while radically reducing our waste and emissions.

We track the media and comments we receive and take careful note of the less tangibles like the inspiration and vibrancy in people's eyes when exposed to these solutions and empowered to step up.

### **What is your leadership style? Is it harder to open up to kids or adults?**

I do my best to live what I dream and talk. To inspire it in others by encouraging them and to commit to shared pathfinding. Then align and unleash them. I'm pretty hands off on the management side of things. We aim to build a team that empowers folks while being aware of weaknesses but focusing on how our strengths overlap to strengthen the whole.

I haven't noticed or had a easier or harder time opening to either. Finding and sharing your voice is always a humbling and empowering process.

### **Do the kids' interests and visions change from the country to the city? Are there different pressures?**

I'm sure they do, though I wouldn't consider this an area of my expertise.

### **Tell us about your creative tools for global/personal transformation?**

I use the same tools in my personal life, the garden and the organizations I'm involved in. By rooting our efforts in timeless principles and crafting appropriate practices, you can always pathfind the richest and most appropriate response. I have three tracks that I study and seek to build competence and consciousness in – Spirituality, Leadership and Ecological Design with a Permaculture emphasis. On the leadership side [Stephen Covey's work](#) amazes me, [Peter Drucker](#), the [Rockwood Leadership Institute](#) for our movement and many others.

I teach a [Personal Ecology course](#) which helps people integrate these three tracks while evolving their own set of practices. A great and basic tool is having a mission statement to guide your focus. I have a quiver of missions, a personal one, one for our organization and one that captures the essence of each important role in my life such as my relationship with my wife, family and friends, our garden and home. It acts as part of a compass that can guide and center us and help us make the best decision. As a framework, I like Stephen Covey's vision, discipline and passion aligned behind your central purpose.

My core practice is sitting on a little wooden stool every morning to stir out what I'm vexed with and stir in what I'm blessed with and then to center in a new day, connection to nature and what is most important to me. As mentioned above, a good set of tracking tools that measure what is important to you is vital. [Peter Senge's](#) core principle of self mastery is about how you deal with the uncomfortable space between vision and reality. This is where the magic's at. I

could talk about this FOREVER, but it's Christmas eve and I gotta get to celebrating my relations!

**We made it!! The Green Movement is a success!! What do you see now in your home town, Tra?**

I see a spark in people's eyes, purpose in their actions, an infectious enthusiasm and luv of life spreading through the landscape. Lawns have become delectable, edible ecosystems, fed by [greywater](#), rainwater catchment and a sense of stewardship. Renewed by the fertility of local waste streams. Of course there is no longer any waste. I see pervious pavement and curb cuts that recharge stormwater. We use radically less energy, water and materials, but the quality of life and community connection is now what's abundant. Cottage industry has sprouted up everywhere.

The crafts of tending life, canning food, fermenting your own tasty beverages, making beeswax candles from backyard hives are all alive and thriving. Where we can't meet needs locally, we have regional relationships and limited but treasured goods from far off places. More than foreign travel, people crave and seek to deepen their connection to place, where they are, when they are.

Life has shifted as we have redeveloped local skills, use locally and regionally appropriate materials to meet our needs and have turned a monstrous waste stream into an elegant and creative culture of creative reuse. People more often choose to turn their lights and life down as we gracefully and ethically descend peak everything. And there you sit under the soft-glowing beeswax drip of another hive gift, bathed in the light of a well-lived, well-loved and well-designed life.

Trahan Heckman

[Daily Acts](#) | [Contact](#)

Please also enjoy [PlanetShifter.com's Interview #1 with Tra](#).

## Amy Stafford Berlin Resident and Studio Blixa6.com Designer

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1460>

In addition to design work, Amy writes a weekly column on art and culture for "Outskirts" on web journal [Fashion Wire Daily](#). She also contributes bi-weekly insights to "Off the Cuff" under the pseudonym AutoBonBon, offering observations on society and intercultural developments. For three years she served as the Arts Editor for Surface Magazine, as well as having been a contributor to the New Arts Examiner and other international publications. Check-out her web site for [Katarina Witt](#).

### **Community is both a simple idea and a tough thing to "map." How do you foster community in Berlin from a business and personal perspective?**

In many ways the community I have fostered in Berlin is an amalgamation of both professional and personal contacts that feed into one another. For example, 5 years ago I helped to found a dance performance organization called [Lucky Trimmer Dance Performance Series](#). We curate and present a collection of short pieces by international choreographers 2x a year in a theater located in a bombed out old department store turned cultural center called [Tacheles](#). The group was formed in an emergent sort of way from a loosely knit group of friends from East Germany and the US who saw that there was a lack of opportunity in Berlin for young choreographers to test ideas in a public arena. We didn't have money and have never gotten state funding, but we manage to pay the theater and dancers from the ticket sales and 5 years later we are still going strong. We have set up a non-profit foundation, have toured other cities in Germany and our shows are consistently sold out. Though I haven't been paid directly for my contributions as their advertising designer and strategic advisor, my work on the board of Lucky Trimmer e.V. has led to numerous client projects, given me valuable exposure and helped me promote my own design business in Berlin.

Another area where I "blend" business and personal is within a community of practitioners and trainers of the [Grinberg Method](#). This is a form of body working and an approach to life that is very new to the US and currently only available in the LA area. In Europe there are centers in Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Austria and France. It is growing in popularity as an effective form of healing and personal development. The method combines elements of massage, reflexology and other movement and breathing techniques, which are effective in the treatment of chronic pain and other things that inhibit living life to the fullest. I am both a client of this method as well as working with many of the practitioners as an identity designer and strategic consultant for their practices. Our relationships are mutually beneficial and because I am experienced with the technique, while still standing slightly to the side of the **Grinberg Method** world, I am able to apply my knowledge of the processes and philosophy to the development of personalized marketing strategies and design systems.

**The Grinberg Method community is loosely woven in with the dance community, which is further connected to the creative communities in which I also work. Somehow each feeds into another and weaves a rich tapestry of personal and professional interconnections are based on the basic principle of operating with integrity and confidence while fostering these qualities in others.**

### **How does the counter culture feel in Berlin vs. the USA? Are youth active?**

Certainly Berlin is a big hub of German counterculture. This stems from various phenomena unique to the city including plentiful cheap housing, many universities and a rich history of being a center of arts and culture. Since I arrived from San Francisco in 2000 things have changed though and the conversion has become more apparent in the past 3-5 years.

At the time of my arrival the center of the city, called [Mitte](#), which was once part of the former East – was full of un-renovated buildings full of artists and squat houses where punks and anarchists set up alternative communities in run-down buildings. These were properties that hadn't yet been re-claimed by owners who had held them before they were turned into DDR state property during the cold war/ Berlin Wall era. Living was cheap and infrastructure was limited, making it a haven for artists and people seeking platforms for alternative lifestyles. The law prevented the buildings from being taken over by developers so they sat in wait for the return of the original owners (who were, upon occasion, sent to concentration camps during the second world war) -while being occupied by "squatters" either as cheap studios

or housing.

Today there are only a few buildings like this left in my neighborhood – and these are under attack from outside investors eager to develop the sites and neighboring property owners who argue the anarchistic lifestyle brings down the property value of the neighboring buildings and disrupts the neighborhood with noise and chaos.

Over time the illegal bars, clubs and alternative art and theater spaces that were commonplace when I arrived have been pushed out and replaced by commercial enterprises, branded shops and hundreds of art galleries. Only a few remain today, while the counterculture moves farther east into less desirable neighborhoods that still act as holdouts of this Old School Berlin anarchistic feeling.

**As an example, a few weeks before Christmas '09 one of these squats, just around the corner from me was shut down by the police – precipitating an unauthorized “demonstration” of angry punks who had been forcibly ousted - marching down my street, knocking over barricades, snarling traffic while waving hastily made banners and shouting angrily. The police were quick to follow – both chasing them on foot and in riot wagons. I walked past the squat house the next day and saw that it had been boarded up with a security guard wearing Kevlar standing in front of the blocked entry.**

During the first 14 years after the fall of the Wall, there was such a flowering of experimental spaces and projects that flew in the face of capitalist ideology– with room to try unconventional concepts. Amazing things happened - like secret restaurants in private living-rooms based on a communist model of paying what you felt like at the end of a meal, innovations in temporary landscaping of vacant lots and ad-hoc boutiques selling hand-made clothes. But since about 2005, the influx of western consumerism has overtaken these spaces and pushed out the counterculture. In one poignant example, not far from me used to be a pop-up summer beer garden parked in bombed out vacant lot, selling beer out of a shabby caravan and offering beach lounge chairs to sit for hours in the stubby grass, enjoying the long summer afternoon/evenings. In the last 3 years it has been converted into condos and an [LPG](#) (an organic grocery store along the lines of Whole Foods).

This kind of low-tech anti-capitalist experimentalism is not as possible in the US or other cities of Western Europe since the cities are already so built out and commercially developed. In certain areas where economic decline and urban decay are apparent, there definitely are outcroppings however, like on the fringe of downtown Phoenix and the underground creative activities in Detroit. Additionally, with the high cost of urban living in most cities, the ability to survive on meager incomes and have time to play, create and try new things is not as accessible. In Paris for instance, life is expensive and squats are illegal though I have visited a few which are careful position themselves as “cultural centers” to avoid being shut down by the cops.

As far as the activity of youth within these counter culture circles – it is harder for me to say. The scenes I have explored in Berlin and Paris are typically inhabited by “kids” ranging from 22-45 years of age. Berlin is only now becoming a center of rising birth rates in Germany which has been experiencing a baby crisis and declining birthrates for many years. But it certainly is an attractive, affordable and exciting city for students, who start university much later than we typically do in the US – generally at about 21-23 years of age.

### **Who is in the Green Movement there and why?**

[Cem Ozdemir](#), is the new [Green Party](#) co-leader, along with [Claudia Roth](#). While both are originally from Germany, Ozdemir is the first Turkish-origin leader of a big party in Germany. Although he tries to downplay his family’s foreign-national heritage, it is still a talking point here where “the Turkish question”, mixed-race Germans and German Nationalism are touchy subjects. He commented to The Economist “The fact that we’re still talking about this shows how far there is to go.”

**The German Green Party platform is based on defending civil liberties and social justice, and also fighting climate change and nuclear power. They want substantial investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transport and new electricity networks. The Greens also call for greater investment in childcare and education to function as**

## forms of indirect economic stimulus.

Admittedly I don't spend much time following German politics. This is in part because I am not permitted to vote on national elections. While technically my permanent residential status allows me to vote on the local level in Berlin, certain laws invoked by the US Patriot Act would place me in peril by aligning myself with a political party outside the US. So – instead I find other ways to be involved with the community – outside the explicitly political world.

## How is Germany dealing with its War ghosts - and what new stories and myths are building steam now?

While we are still on the subject of the green movement, it might be interesting to point out that one of the less discussed war ghosts is that the first political party who advocated ecological policies was the National Socialists (Nazis). For them, preserving ecology and creating a society that was integrated with the whole of nature – striving for connectedness with the totality of life and with nature itself - was deeply connected with their idea of the preserving the German Volk and the mystique surrounding the Fatherland's "roots of blood (the race/volk) and soil (the natural environment)". **The Nazis were ideologically inclined to agrarian romanticism, denigrating the rationalism of the Enlightenment, urban culture and the evils of industrialization – pointing an anti-semitic finger towards the rootless evils of the foreign Jewish influence as a key threat to the purity of the homeland.**

During the Weimar Republic there was a popular youth movement called the [Wandervögel](#) – loosely translated as "the wandering free spirits" – who dreamed of harmony with nature and stressed the primacy of direct emotional experience over critical critique and action. While they claimed an apolitical stance, this idealistic youth movement became an easy target for the Nazis who leveraged the seductive terminology of reactionary ecology, bringing them into their idealistic fold early on. This is not to say that the Nazis were cynical in their environmental actions – even the Autobahn's design and construction was as environmentally sensitive as possible - becoming a proud expression of the German landscape and the German essence.

Ultimately ecology and environmental themes are neither issues of the left or right - but if we are to learn from what happened with the Nazis, we see these issues need to be considered in larger social context – not based merely on overarching notions of "ecological or green" – but also recognizing that even our ideas of nature are socially constructed. Perhaps it is interesting to mention that today the German Green Party's largest constituencies are affluent, well educated and reside in the urban centers.

**So, in the wake of Nazism, the Germans still struggle with how to remember and not memorialize the ghosts of the war. This is a huge topic here – and the subject of many a massive PhD thesis.** One of the phenomena I have found particularly apparent is the resistance to mystical romanticism of the kind that was perpetrated by the National Socialists. This is hammered home with an overarching adherence to a rationalism, academic intellectualism and proud mechanical superiority – as evidenced by their most famous brand exports: **Mercedes, VW, BMW, Porsche and Krupps (Thyssen Steel)** .

The currently growing myth is called [Ostalgie](#) – looking back at the old East with warm fuzzy memories of a simpler time. The first 10 years after German reunification were filled with horror stories about the Stasi and the cruelties of Communism, but in the past several years this has been replaced with more personalized accounts of the things that are missed about the old East. Many movies have come out to help foster this feeling – like "Goodbye Lenin" for instance, which I saw in the theater at [Alexanderplatz](#) – a few meters from where the story took place. **This Ostalgie feeling culminated last year in a wave of articles, documentaries and exhibitions commemorating the 20-year anniversary of the fall the Berlin Wall.**

We will see how things go from here.

## What are the tools of your craft?

My tools include a MacBook Pro, an extra monitor, notebooks, loose paper, pencils and pens, watercolors, a digital

camera and scanner, Adobe's Creative Suite, MS Office, tons of books on all kinds of subjects for inspiration (not just art/design oriented but also dealing with science, sociology, politics, post modern theory, business and economics), a huge collection of images and graphic samples that I give my clients to brainstorm with, my head, my heart, my eyes, my hands and my belly.

**"When I moved to Germany in 2000 my discussions with him about simplified living, reduced eco-footprints and resource management became practice where in the US they had been theory - for example: every-day German standards of energy efficiency, using bikes not cars, living with less and emergent community driven projects (often fueled by remnants of post-East German solidarity and American can-do optimism)."**

**What makes your creative products unique? Please describe your innovation process. How important is evaluation and client feedback?**

Many clients have commented to me that I don't have a specific design style, but that I create designs to suit their unique needs without foisting my "vision" upon them. While each artist has their own "hand", like each person has their own handwriting, my work as a designer and artist is driven far more concept than style. **I was not trained as a graphic designer, but have a master's degree in fine art – with a conceptual, multi-disciplinary foundation.** This gives me the ability to look at clients with a much broader approach and viewpoint than simply problem solving with layout and graphics. I also have professional experience working in several facets of the business of branding – from high-end retail window display to commercial photography and marketing for start-ups. This gives me a unique advantage that classically trained graphic designers, particularly in a country of specialists like Germany, do not have. **I also have that plucky American style of optimism and "can do" spirit that is rare in this country. This in itself makes my services unique here.**

My process involves in-depth intake and brainstorming sessions with my clients and then more self-directed research to study the markets they operate within before I start any actual designing. Normally the core ideas start to emerge during the brainstorming sessions – when we get to the questions about favorite childhood stories, superhero personas and other metaphors that get their creative juices flowing. **Often I a direction just pops into my head** and I know it is right. Although I may have the general idea there, I give myself time to let it simmer and refine before I start sketching things out.

The way I explain it to my clients – the intake session is like selecting the different ingredients that will go into a giant stew. Will it have lots of carrots, beef and thyme or tofu, noodles and lemongrass? When you make soup it takes time for the flavors to blend and deepen – and it usually tastes better the second day. I do the same thing with the materials that emerge from the brainstorming. I let them stew for a while, cooking and reducing until specific, unique flavors emerge. Then I develop about 3 different directions that the client gets to choose from. This feedback is a fundamental part of the development – and it happens at many stages along the way. **It is a collaborative process that requires me to step aside from my ego.** Heck it's not my brand that is being developed - it is my client's. They may not know exactly what they want or need, but they know it when they see it.

**You make use of personal dreams and mythologies in your work with clients. Is this always a positive thing?**

Yes – I believe so. Even if some of the myths and unrealized dreams are painful to face – they challenge my clients to see the overarching dramas that influence the choices they make in their lives, their relationships and with their careers. It is always enlightening for them to pull back from the close-up view they normally operate with and see the red line that connects the different dots of their life that are often seeded in early childhood. By getting people to think in metaphors instead of concrete facts they start loosen up and get results in the process. They also begin to feel more coherent and clear in their work – and can become better at articulating not just what they do but how and why in a way that's compelling for others – whether customers, prospects, partners or their employees.

**Please give us your definition of sustainability.**

Ultimately I see sustainability as an umbrella encompassing all facets concerning the notion of enduring over time. This

umbrella creates space for behaving thoughtfully and responsibly - in ways that honor the past while supporting both the present and future generations through actions that consider the interconnection between social, environmental and economic needs.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion?**

Mmm – I wouldn't put it in the same category as religion. I would be more likely to say that it's a relatively recent re-discovery of a basic awareness that we have forgotten about as a result of our move to a [Cartesian](#) way of thinking, which has led to industrialization and the resulting consumer culture we are finally beginning to wake up from. We now have to re-integrate this knowledge and weave it with our current frameworks of economy, environment and societies – reinventing and re-tooling certain beliefs and behaviors, stepping back to see how the subtle interconnections between things are affected – like when we pull on this production chain or tweak that chemical compound.

However, I do see some zealotry cropping up within this new re-awakening – which could be compared to the behavior of a new religious convert. Ultimately I would like to avoid the push for sustainability turning into another Inquisition (**again, we can look back to the Nazis for an example of how people can get carried away with an idea and wind up destroying so much in the pursuit of their misguided notion of what is right**).

### **Are there special symbols and colors in “sustainability?”**

There are certain colors & icons that have become clichés in the sustainability movement. There are also graphic styles that have been harnessed to create an emotional response that links to fuzzy ideas of sustainability. For example, just think of all the brochures at Starbucks, lined up next to the cafes of milk and various pre-packaged sweeteners that promote their fair trade policies and local charity programs. The pamphlets are decorated with natural textures and layered with torn bits of paper, handwritten texts, warm toned photos of indigenous farmers and botanical wood block prints from history printed on 60% recycled content paper.

**When I think of particular colors, icons and symbols for sustainability, I imagine colors like the greens of fresh grass, the deep sea and fir trees, warm natural hemp and tobacco colors, a little dash of earthy brown and some pale robin's egg blue. The typical icons include trees, plants and leaves, hands holding hands or 3 arrows bent into a circular form – like the recycling symbol, but I also see something like an interconnected network – like a mind map where each element is connected to many other ones, making up a web of complexity.**

### **What is alchemy and how do you see it working in the world?**

The traditional idea of alchemy is the arcane art of turning lead into gold. While many may believe that this was a real practice, employing such mythic tools as the philosopher's stone, I see it more metaphorically - as a description for the art of manifesting one's desires in the world.

In recent years a video called [“The Secret”](#) and subsequent books have soared to popularity – giving the general instructions for how to apply the law of attraction in one's own life. Ultimately this law of attraction could be considered a form of alchemy – of working within one's current situation and generating new, desired outcomes out of old orders. While there is no arguing with the enormous commercial success of “The Secret”, I find it to be a bit simplistic and object oriented in its approach – sidestepping the fundamentals of how this phenomenon actually functions. [Louise Hay](#) has been teaching this stuff for years. Additionally, the journalist [Lynne McTaggart](#) has done significant work researching and documenting scientific experiments in her book “The Intention Experiment” and others. These books delve more deeply in to the science behind the “the Secret” and have also revealed much more profound applications beyond getting your dream house or car.

At the end of the day the lesson is very inspiring, empowering and yet sobering at the same time – showing us that we are each creating our world around us with our thoughts at every moment. When we can change our thoughts, we can change our lives and in doing so gently impact the lives of those in our sphere. I have certainly experienced the positive effects of this in my own life.

## **Tell us about key initiations that have taken place in your creative instruction and work. Any lessons to share?**

Your ability to achieve in the world is equal to your ability to imagine the kind of world you chose to create for yourself. If you can imagine it, you can create it.

That being said – beware of the barrage of negative messages we are constantly bombarded with in the media, internet and even the visual noise on the streets from advertising and billboards. I gave up TV 10 years ago, stopped listening to the BBC when I wake up and instead get my news from carefully selected sources. I have taken control over which stories I read and which I don't. I pay attention to the agendas of the sources I get my news from and have more control over my mental state because of it. This does not mean burying my head in the sand and ignoring the world – but really, there are some things that just don't help anyone to know about.

Today I dug through my spam folder and out of morbid curiosity read all the “breaking news alerts” from CNN that wind up there throughout the week. While I didn't expect any good news, I was also disturbed to discover that 9 out of 11 of the messages since New Years have been about fatal shootings or suicide bombers. The other two were about a political figure stepping down and a sports figure being suspended for bringing a gun to the arena where the game was being held. Sheesh – is this what I'm missing? **Thank you spam filter, you rock!**

Studying critical theory, feminism and postmodernism in art school gave me the tools to observe and critique the mechanisms of mass media with a well-focused eye. While it makes it difficult sometimes to feel free to be wantonly creative, it also makes me aware enough to step back and ask tough questions of the guys trying to force-feed me the pound of industrial sugar hidden in my cornflakes. **In my Branding Design classes I teach my students how to deconstruct the ads they are barraged with every day.** I challenge them to think beyond the snap judgments we have been conditioned to make in a sound-bite world. It is enormously gratifying to see the little light bulbs going on over their heads when they start to recognize the tools of tyranny we so easily take for granted, from unethical photo retouching to coercive language manipulation. Then they begin to realize both the power and responsibility they hold as communication designers and the imperative for making ethical choices that foster a healthy and sustainable world.

## **Many are talking about a major collapse in the world economy and a catastrophic period of anger and hunger. Do you see this near-term scenario? If not, what is your perception of the next 2-5 years on the planet?**

I'm not a futurist – so anything I project about the near-term scenario is mere speculation drawn from my observations as an American gal living outside the US.

Certainly we are barraged with daily updates on the economic collapse, terrorist plots, dying real estate markets, failing healthcare reforms and other bleak announcements that paint a dark picture of the future. Some point to 2012 as the culmination point for all these atrocities, buckling their seatbelts and getting set for the wild rollercoaster ride to that not so distant destination.

Ultimately I see that as the darkness intensifies, so does the light – in equal measure. As the facades of the old guard start to fall, people are becoming more aware of other choices available all around them. The post-materialist society is growing each day, embracing alternative methods of healing, natural energy, food production, transportation and how to relate to one another as community. We are beginning to adjust to the idea of “being” instead of “having” – and discovering the fulfillment of this new perspective. It is enormously freeing and empowering to discover the pleasures of living with less. But it takes a serious jolt to kick-start this paradigm shift – particularly in an environment designed to keep people on the hamster wheel of desire, consumption and debt. Perhaps this consciousness shift is an inevitability that has grown from the collapse. I would argue that it has been there the whole time, but only now are people clueing in en-mass to a new way of being. As people lose their old ways of life – their jobs, houses and the trappings of an untenable debt cycle, they are forced to re-invent and question what is truly important in their lives. It may be painful at the start – but ultimately people are adapting to a more simple and authentic way of life - and how can this be a bad thing?

I had my own experience of this in 2002 when I lost my job as a high powered creative director for a Swiss/German think tank and found myself unemployed in East Berlin – forced to re-invent and re-envision the kind of life I wanted to live. The nature of the beaten down economy here meant most people were in the same boat – but those with good attitudes, strong communities and social networks, those who weren't so busy looking back at what they had lost instead of what they actually had in front of them, they were the ones who were successful at building a strong, meaningful life for themselves and others.

**So – we can choose to look into the darkness and say ooh how terrible it is all going – or we can turn and look into the light that is right there as well and say – “wow – look at all these opportunities I hadn't considered before. Imagine the power I have to create the world I choose – right here. So knowing what I now know, what can I do to bring value and meaning to my life and contribute to the lives of those I love?”.**

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## Interview with Lynn Rogoff, AMERIKIDS

### “Sacajawea’s TransMedia Rebirth: The Green Girl Game Seeds Our New Sustainable Mythology”

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1479>

- “Bird Girl and her friends find and save the Endangered planets and roots growing on the river side and in the mountains.
- The player / viewer and Bird Girl identify green, yellow and red plants.
- We must identify the safe roots and berries to eat.
- If Bird Girl or her friends behavior towards the animals or planets is destructive then the animals planet will react.”

#### [The Green Kids Media Project](#)

#### **Bird Girl, The Green Girl. Why is the main character female?**

Bird Girl is loosely based on and inspired by [Sacajawea](#). Sacajawea also known as Bird Woman was a young Native American who guided [Lewis and Clark](#) across the Rocky Mountain on their expedition from 1804 to 1806. As a young girl she was also referred to as Bird Girl. When our company decided to develop a product in several mediums for the Green movement, **we felt that Sacajawea’s awareness of nature and animals would be inspiring character for a worldwide audience**. In this fanciful world that we have created there are a number of major characters in addition to Bird Girl. Her older brother an Indian chief is name Chief Can’t Wait. Bird Girl and Chief Can’t Wait have the ability to communicate with our animal characters. We have three characters who also communicate with the player. Suga Bear, Bizzy Beaver and Great Bird **direct the player to help save endangered species**.

#### **Nature is your Religious and Action foundation. Will some push back on this spirituality?**

We do not use nature as a Religion but rather incorporate the **Native American philosophy that believes the Earth is their Mother and the Wind is their Father**. Thus hold the environment in reverence with a sense of connection to the environment as a family member.

#### **The player is initiated into a world of values. What are they and how did you select them?**

The values in this game are that the species of the world are worth saving and with some effort the player can learn where these endangered animals are worldwide and attempt to prevent their extinction. These **transmedia products** also allow for social networking worldwide where you can meet other like-minded individuals who have identified a species of interest to them. The game also allows for the player to learn the difference between extinction, endangered and threatened levels. **The player also begins to communicate with the animals and see the world through their eyes.**

#### **What are the [new green symbols, songs and stories in Green Girl?](#)**

We do not have iconography in this universe that we have created. Rather, in this fantasy world humans and animals have a way to connect and communicate.

#### **Is preventing species extinction an act of sustainability?**

Yes of course, preventing species extinction is on the road to sustainability of our planet. You learn in this game that the animal’s habitat is threatened and therefore their species is threatened. Thus **humans must become aware that their actions threaten animal habitat and thus their species survival.**

“Skill encounters” – please explain how this works.

The more you learn about the nature of extinction, endangerment and threats to a species the faster you can develop skills to assist these creatures or plants. For example, if your canoe riding skills can get you down river more easily and more quickly then you can help the creature of the river. As well, if your horse riding skills are developed you can reach the mountain top more easily to assist the animals who are endangered.

**What are Hero Points? How many does the player need to accomplish a goal?**

Hero Points are accumulated as you find and save threatened or endangered species. **The more species you save the more Hero Points you receive** . You can play against other online players to see who gets more Hero Points.

**Is the game journal like the coloring book? Online and/or paper?**

For the young player, you will be able to be print out your journal and color by hand. For the older player, they can keep their journal as an online document to record all their experiences.

**When will the Green Girl pilot be online? Do you have sponsors?**

We are in the process now of working with Green Charter Schools to develop Green Curriculum in the K-8 years. We are also actively searching for partners and investors to build, develop, produce and distribute our brand of Green Kids Media. If you are interested in forming an alliance, see their [demo](#). To learn more about the company, visit [AMERIKIDS](#).

**[Lynn Rogoff](#)**

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## Larry Hall, SurvivalCondo.com

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1481>

### **What is a Survival Condo?**

"A survival condo is a facility that offers individual ownership of a residential unit within a superstructure that offers the highest level of physical protection, redundant infrastructure for power, water, air, and food; as well as "shared or common" facilities for extended off-grid survival. This definition also includes the concept of the individual owners forming an "extended family" where everyone shares the responsibilities for group security, operation and maintenance of the facility, new daily functions for education, cross training, hydroponic farming, medical support, and as many other tasks as possible to create the highest quality of life for the "extended family" while operating in "survival mode".

By starting our project with a Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS), we have a \$60 million dollar head start. A competitor has to spend that much just to catch up, we can go dollar for dollar from that point on, but that is one heck of a head start on the value proposition. This project has the advantages of letting the members own a piece of history, the coolness of a missile base, the protection of a nuclear hardened bunker, and the features of a luxury condo." – LH

### **How does the technology change when you bury the silo vs. site it above ground?**

The technology would fit into several areas that highlight the differences; Lighting, Plumbing, and Ventilation.

The lighting technology needs to take into account frequency to minimize depression while at the same time produce energy efficient lighting with a high mean time between failures. The new LED products fit this requirement like a glove. The LED fixtures and bulbs use a fraction of the energy, they are full-spectrum, and many have a bulb life in excess of 50,000 hours. We standardize on a few models and maintain spares that can be used throughout the facility.

Plumbing is different only in the fact that the sewage must be pumped up as compared to gravity based systems in above ground structures. The water is the same except it is purified by reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light to get water that is many time more pure than what is found in most municipalities or households.

Ventilation is much different because the primary emphasis on the underground survival facility is to purify the air through the use of NBC filtration systems. In addition, our air is first cleaned by a water curtain that removes large contaminants from the air such as ash, sand, or dust. The pre-filter water curtain means that the NBC filters stay cleaner longer and minimizes the amount of maintenance.

### **Why the full background investigation on your customers? What would disqualify a buyer / family?**

Many of the people investing in a survival condo have children. One aspect of the background check is to make sure we do not have anyone who would be a threat to the children. We also do not want to have problems that could arise from people who have known violent background or anger management issues. We are attempting to make the best of a bad situation and if we find ourselves in "survival mode" and people are understandably stressed from the situation that requires the use of the facility, we don't want to compound that problem by finding out one or more of our fellow survivalists is a violent felon or a child molester.

The overall purpose is to use some common sense to find obvious problems for either the individual or the group. One area of concern would be to find out if anyone has claustrophobia for example. Other areas of concern are with medical conditions that we are not equipped to deal with.

### **The idea of the "extended family" is interesting. What issues do you see here?**

People are all different. I look at my 5 year old son and I see tremendous differences in the personalities in his school class of eight children. Adults are no different. Any time you bring together a group of 50 to 60 people, there will be

people who simply don't get along or have personality conflicts. It is my experience that most people can set aside those differences when they share a common objective, like survival. Some people may not be comfortable with children. Some people may work harder than others.

The hope is that we will look at differences as points of interest as opposed to points to attack or fear. On the other hand, having an extended family of 50 to 60 people can be a lot of fun. The group size is large enough to have a variety to meet socializing requirements and small enough to get to know people very well.

**"Survival Mode" is a hot theme at survivalcondo.com. What is your personal view of the threats to the US public in the next 10 years?**

Pick your poison here. Economic collapse, Pandemics, Terror, Global Climate Change, Super volcano, Earthquakes, Tsunamis, Solar flares, Pole shifts, Planet X, OORT Cloud, civil unrest.....

I'm an engineer so I lean toward the theories based on scientific data. In this case I am concerned about the current solar cycle and the new data from the NASA THEMIS spacecraft that found holes in our electromagnetic field that protects the Earth from solar wind. These holes are as large as four times the diameter of the Earth. The effect on people is not the problem, it is the power grid that is at risk. If we lose a large number of transformers, life would be much harder and millions would die. If I had to pick one threat as the most likely, solar storms and loss of the power grid would be at the top of that list.

**Tell us who designed and manufactures the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) filters.**

We have not installed them yet as we are not at that point in the construction process. The two manufacturers that we are considering are military grade units from Temet and Lunor.

**Does this boil down to the end of the world or the start of a new one?**

Great question, the answer is the start of a new one. Our planet has been through many cycles like this one and the fact that we are here is proof that it is unlikely to be an Extinction Level Event (ELE). It is also my hope that the collective consciousness of people everywhere focus on a bright, joyous, and hopeful future based on a synergistic relationship with "Mother Earth".

The practices of our past are not sustainable and we as a species need to learn how to coexist not only with each other but with nature. If we can find the technologies to rid us of being slaves to energy production, we would indeed be free. If we are not fighting each other for limited resources; maybe we could get to know one another. Plan for the worst and visualize the best because we have the ability to create a much better world.

**"Once silo number one is sold out, we will begin taking deposits on silo 2." Where is silo number one?**

In Kansas.

**Larry Hall, Project Manager/Owner**

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**Also of Interest – [missilesbases.com](http://missilesbases.com)**

## **MinnesotaSoybean.com**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1484>

### **Tell us about the life cycle of the commercial soybean. What happens when!?**

Farmers plant soybeans in spring, and harvest them in fall.

Farmers sell soybeans throughout the year to grain elevators (1st purchasers).

Grain elevators sell these soybeans either to US soybean processors or exporters.

98% of all soybeans are eventually processed into soybean meal and oil.

### **What is the soybean check-off?**

½ of 1% of the value of a bushel of all the soybeans that farmers grow and market in US is deducted at the first point of sale. This is then forwarded to state farmer boards to invest in soybean related research, promotion and new uses programs within the US and around the world.

### **What is the latest word on the value of the protein in soybeans versus beef?**

Soybeans are the #1 source of vegetable protein for the world. You would need to check with the beef industry for their answer to the rest of this question.

### **How does the MinnesotaSoybean define sustainability?**

MN Soybean Growers Association is a state affiliate to the American Soybean Association. ASA's is ...

2.18.14 ASA supports the statutory definition of sustainable agriculture, as included in the 1990 Farm Bill. Public Law 101-624, Title XVI, Subtitle A, Section 1603. Under that law, sustainable agriculture means "an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

- Satisfy human food and fiber needs;
- Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
- Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
- Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

### **"Half of U.S. soybeans processed for livestock feed are fed to poultry." What overall percentage is this?**

48% for 2008 according to ASA's 2009 Soy Stats Book

### **Is there substantial bio-fuel / bio-waste in the soybean harvest cycle? Does [mns soybean.org](http://mns soybean.org) have experience in small scale bioreactors?**

We are not aware of any experience with small scale bioreactors for soybeans in Minnesota. However, this past Wednesday, February 3, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) just released its Final Rule for the Renewable Fuel Standard Program (RFS2) that was positive for biodiesel and particularly soy-based biodiesel. EPA's ruled that biodiesel from soy can achieve significant Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions relative to petroleum diesel. EPA says that biodiesel can exceed the 50 percent reduction threshold needed to qualify for the RFS2 biodiesel mandate. Biodiesel is one of the cleanest burning biofuels now used in commercial markets. Biodiesel is determined a good renewable and sustainable energy source that can play a role in national efforts to increase energy security and help improve the environment.

### **How many acres were planted in soybeans in MN in 2009?**

USDA's latest adjusted acreage estimate (Jan. 12, 2010) put MN's harvested acreage at 7.12 million acres at 40 bushels per acre.

**Are soybeans sexy?**

N/A

**Approximately how many tons of fertilizer and pesticides (if any) were required?**

Will have to get back to you on this one with more detailed info from USDA or University of MN. But soybeans are not a major user of fertilizers. Regarding herbicides about 90% of all soybean seed planted in MN is glyphosate tolerant, so soybeans not a major herbicide user either. Pesticides are permitted and used infrequently during drier summers where necessary to control aphids and spider mites.

**What is the PR strategy for this crop at Farmer-Yoakam.com?**

To let consumers know the value of the soybean, its many uses, its importance in the value chain and also the economic value that soybeans and agriculture in general mean to the Minnesota economy.

**"While most countries soybean imports have remained fairly stable, China's imports have grown from four metric ton to 42 metric tons over the past eight years! With 1.32 billion people, China's demand for protein is strong. China produces only 14 metric ton/year of soybeans itself." What is the downside of feeding China, if any?**

I really can't think of a downside of the US selling soybeans to China, so it can feed itself better and create a growing market for soybeans and other agricultural products.

**Wouldn't the energy it takes to ship beans to China be better allocated to the US market?**

The soybean trade dates back decades and as ships come to America with goods for sale, those ships go back to other ports of call carrying our crop to be used throughout the world market. Shipping and trade are economic drivers around the world that is necessary to keep the world markets vibrant for the sale and consumption of not only soybeans, but all goods.

**John A. Lumpe, Chief Operating Officer**

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## **Larry Tackett, President, Sustainable Novato**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1487>

### **Sustainable Novato Goals:**

- To educate, inspire and empower the community in the practical application of sustainable principles, and the actions required to affect public policy.
- To establish more grassroots support for sustainability advocacy at the local level.
- To ensure that long-term city planning is done within the context of sustainability.
- To educate and empower our friends and neighbors to act in the interests of a Sustainable Novato

### **What are your goals as the incoming President of SN?**

My main goal is to build on the success of our advocacy and educational programs and begin engaging the community more fully, to expand from activism to activation. The city government cannot be the only arbitrator determining the health and vitality of our community. I want to create ways to get the support of the citizens of Novato to participate in building a sustainable future.

To do this it is essential to expand our community outreach. To collaborate with every interested organization in the city, civic clubs, the faith based community, schools, senior centers. I really want to get the elders to contribute their wisdom to the conversation.

We will be honing our public conversation and expanding our public speaking opportunities. I think we need to reframe how we speak about sustainability. We have been good at what and how but not why. So, it is time for us to begin saying why we are working for a sustainable Novato.

Expanding our membership base is of highest priority. We need more people participating with us and it is the base for our funding.

I want the board to begin mentoring at least one person to replace them. I have a fabulous board of directors. They are intelligent, committed and focused in action. We recently expanded our Board to include the previous Mayor of Novato Jim LeLand and the Director of Modernization at the Marin Community College District V-Anne Chernock. David Dixon, recently joined us also, bringing our total to 10. They join our current Board members, Marie Chan, VP for Environmental Health Initiative, Marla Fields, VP Sustainable Communities, Donn Davey, VP Resource Efficiency Initiative, Ed Mainland, Treasurer and Marin Clean Energy, Annan Paterson Membership. We need hundreds more just like them. What they know and how they work needs to be passed on and expanded in the community. We have hundreds of people on our mailing list, but we need our members to become more engaged. That is our goal for this next year.

I want us to have fun and enjoy the good work we do. If we are happy then it will be infectious to everyone we encounter. Most importantly we won't burn out. We are in this for the long term. I want the organization to know that this is our legacy.

### **How close is Marin County to zero waste?**

Novato has a zero waste plan, but it's only partially implemented. We have come a long way in making recycling easier. A few years ago they shifted from segregated recycling to single stream and the amount of recycling greatly increased. The county and all the municipalities are all moving in that direction. Primarily because the local landfill is almost full. Once it is closed then our garbage will have to be shipped many miles to dispose of it. We have a lot more work to do in this area.

### **What will it take?**

It will take the political will. Most citizens don't care as long as it gets taken care of at a reasonable cost. It will be

cheaper to go to Zero Waste than to ship it away.

A friend of mine, Carrie Bachelder, has been working for years to create a reuse facility and has just opened The Away Station, in Fairfax. This has been one of the missing ingredients for LEED certification, construction site waste reduction.

It will take an education program for consumers and manufacturers to learn how to reduce waste by choosing packaging that is minimal and doesn't end up in the landfills.

Conversations are underway now with the landfill operators to compost green waste instead of using it for cover. This will reduce future methane production.

### **What are the underlying values and principles at Sustainable Novato?**

We envision a healthy eco-system integrated with economic vitality and social equity for all residents. We have been bringing this into existence by designing and producing educational events and community forums presenting the sustainable perspective. We encourage sustainable policies and practices in planning efforts in Novato, i.e. green building codes, green business programs and reduction of environmental pollutants. We also support localization of business. A local economy is more vital and provides more security in these uncertain times. Each dollar spent locally circulates seven times throughout the economy before leaving. When we shop chain stores it immediately leaves. One million dollars spent locally is like having seven million dollars of value in the economy. Shopping chain stores it is just one million dollars of value.

Here is a game everyone can play. When you are in a group of people ask them if they would all like to leave richer than they came. Of course everyone will. Take a \$100 bill and turn to the first person and ask them what they will give you for the \$100. Make the exchange, and they turn to the next person and do the same, until it goes all the way around to you again and you make the last exchange. Then take the \$100 and put it back in your pocket. If there were 20 people in the room, you just created \$2000 of value in just a few minutes. You created something more also and that is the personal interaction and exchange that will be more memorable. This is a demonstration of a local economy. Now ask if they want to see how a non-local economy works. If it is a yes then ask someone in the group if they have a \$100 bill, approach them and tell them what you will give them in return for it. Once you are in agreement take the \$100 and stick it in your pocket and walk away. The usual reaction is hey wait a minute that's my \$100. This makes the point and its fun.

### **Many folks are denying that global warming is a real problem? How do you deal with this?**

The problem with climate change is that it is invisible and is happening over a long period of time, so it doesn't appear imminent for most people, given everything else that is happening. So it is easy to ignore. We are looking at ways we can make it more visible. I think art is one way we can do that. If any of your readers have any ideas on this please share.

Since we are not a flawed species but one that is just mistaken, operating on old unexamined assumptions, we have the ability to change and to learn new more adaptive ways of being. Re-examining the assumptions that we live by will give us access to change.

Denial is part of the fear. I just ask them do they notice any changes in the weather or in nature. If they do then I say, "Whether it is caused by man or it's a natural phenomenon, there are things we can do to mitigate it". I ask them do they agree, if I get a yes, then I ask, "What do you think we could do." If it is a no, then I ask them given the state of the world today, what would be the right thing to do?

I always try to find some issue they are interested in and talk about that. I keep looking for their commitment and encourage them to volunteer or support that. If everybody does at least one thing in his or her community then everything will get done.

Sustainable Novato's main focus has been to get the City of Novato to join the Marin Clean Energy program. To date we have not been successful in doing this. We will be re-looking at our strategy. The Marin Board of Supervisors just guaranteed funding for the next few months to get MCE to the delivery stage. MCE finalized a service delivery contract with Shell Oil company to supply clean renewable energy. The only thing in the way of our success is PG&E.

PG&E has taken a page out of Karl Rove's be nasty play book and is pushing the Bush era culture of fear onto MCE, the local government agencies and the California Public Utilities Commission. They are making threats and refusing to deliver the power that is contracted by MCE, even though the Community Choice Aggregation law states that they have to deliver the power. They are also suing MCE to slow them down and cost them money to defend themselves in court, so they can get a new law passed that will make it virtually impossible to build local power companies.

They have also funded an initiative to change the law so that it requires two thirds vote from the people to set up a local power authority. This is called, "Citizens Right to Vote Act." Again a Karl Rove ploy, say one thing but mean another. If California passes this then we are stuck with an antiquated and bankrupt power company that has no real commitment to renewable clean energy.

The new Supreme Court ruling allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on elections has emboldened them.

**I think Jack Capitalism and Eli Sustainability are headed for a blowout, down and dirty fistfight in the months ahead? Your thoughts at ring side?**

Randy Hayes of the Rainforest Action Network says, "There is no commerce on a dead planet." Conservation is a more accessible term for capitalist, because they understand that you have to live off of your interest not your capital.

We also talk about a thriving economy, which is beyond sustainability, because for an economy to thrive it has to have gone beyond sustainability.

I think we have to totally reframe the sustainability conversation for different audiences. My personal goal as president of Sustainable Novato is to shift from big systemic issues to smaller more graspable concepts. I've proposed to the board that we create a "Healthy Novato Campaign." All of the issues, environmental toxins, water, food, clean air, zero waste, green buildings can be reframed as a community health issue.

It just makes good business sense to be green these days and if a business is not sustainable by definition it will not survive.

**Water or land or population or safe energy. Which arena is the next real BIG issue and why?**

Water in California is always the limiting factor. As climate change progresses it will be a bigger challenge. We depend on the slow melting of the snow pack in the Sierras to supply us water throughout the dry summer months. If it melts too fast then we will lose our most reliable source of water. We have been in drought condition for the past few years, so we are vulnerable.

Safe clean energy is coming into its own, naturally. We are already at peak oil and we see that in the prices at the pump. This in itself will drive renewable energy as the energy of choice.

**Is nuclear power back on the front burner in CA/ USA, as the Obama stated?**

The big engineering companies will always push for Nuclear Power. It is a cash cow for them to build. Since John Perkins exposed large international infrastructure projects as ways of indenturing developing countries these companies will need to find someone else to keep feeding them. So there will be a lot of money lobbying for nuclear and clean coal (oxymoron).

In addition to opposing it we need to mobilize our resources and build clean renewable power companies. If every resident in Marin, would just calculate their ecological footprint to determine the cost to offset their impact and then put that money into a loan fund to be used to build the infrastructure, we could raise \$30,000,000 dollars a year. Over 10 years we would have \$300,000,000 invested in generating our own power. That is energy security and everybody owns it.

The antidote to nuclear power is imagination and creativity.

### **What does the Marin Community Foundation contribute?**

MCF has shifted the way it is working in the community over the past few years. One of its main focuses is environmental sustainability. They funded our community educational programs. I heard recently that they have created a grant fund to put solar on all the schools in Marin. They have a huge commitment to creating Marin to be sustainable.

### **How successful were your 2009 – 10 Initiatives?**

We worked on a two year plan to design and produce community forums. We conducted 13 forums on; Creating Sustainable Communities, Environmental Toxins and Human Health, Rethinking Waste, Green Schools, Marin Clean Energy, Green Building, Climate Change and the effects on the local watershed, Transportation and Local Economies.

We advocated for residential and commercial green building ordinances, which were passed. We successfully set up green school programs throughout the district and got all toxic cleaning supplies replaced with non-toxic alternatives. Working with the county we were able to improve the Integrated Pest Management program.

We have changed the economic landscape for Novato green business opportunities. Our work has served to increase interest in and the market for green building products, green building materials, solar installations, healthy personal care products, reusable and recyclable materials and non-toxic pesticides. Check us out on our [website!](#)

### **Is not the sustainability movement a cry for the next level of human consciousness?**

Yes, we can't solve the problems with the same level of consciousness that created them. The biggest crisis is a crisis of imagination. What limits our imagination is fear.

I think the sustainability movement is a cry for reconnection, reconnection to self, nature and each other. There is no consciousness alone. We only expand and evolve in relationship with each other. One of my favorite sayings is "The greatest nuclear disaster of the 20th century was the nuclear family". Before World War II, we all lived in extended families and smaller communities. Humans are pack animals and need the closeness of each other to thrive.

By being reconnected we alleviate our fear thus opening us to re-imagine a future that is sustainable and thriving.

### **How do you define evolution in 2010 on out?**

Well we are at a very definitive time in our existence. For the first time we have the ability to design the future we want instead of constantly adapting to the changes. To evolve we must first wake up. We have to wake up to the impact we have on our life support system. We have to wake up to the belief that we each make a difference and we have to wake up see that we have to work together to make the changes that are necessary to survive.

Future evolution is social evolution. Together we are a genius. Every challenge facing us has a doable solution, what is missing is the will to do them.

**Larry Tackett, President**

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## **Bron Taylor, Author of Dark Green Religion**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1493>

### **Could you start with a brief definition of [Dark Green Religion](#), the main title of your new book?**

Dark green religion involves perceptions nature is sacred and has intrinsic value, a corresponding belief that everything is interconnected and mutually dependent, and a feeling of belonging to nature and felt kinship with all living things. This feeling of kinship enjoins a sense of responsibility to protect all life and the systems they are a part of and upon which they depend.

### **Do you think that Earth is heaven? Do others?**

One important proponent of what I have called DGR was Edward Abbey, the writer best known for his reflections on a he spent at Arches National Monument in Utah (now a National Park). When reflecting on notions like the supernatural and heaven Abbey opined, "If a man's imagination were not so weak, so easily tired, if his capacity for wonder not so limited, he would abandon forever such fantasies of the supernatural. He would learn to perceive in water, leaves, and silence more than sufficient of the absolute and marvelous, more than enough to console him for the loss of ancient dreams."

Abbey wrote these words in *Desert Solitaire* (p. 155), which was published in 1968. Twenty years later in a preface to the 1988 edition, and shortly before his death, Abbey made sure he would not be misunderstood: "*Desert Solitaire*, I'm happy to add, contains no hidden meanings, no secret messages. It is no more than it appears to be, the plain and simple account of a long sweet season lived in one of the world's most splendid places. If some might object that the book deals too much with mere appearances, with the surface of things, and fails to engage and reveal the patterns of unifying relationships that many believe form the true and underlying reality of existence, I can only reply that I am content with surfaces, with appearances. I know nothing about underlying reality, having never encountered any. . .

Appearance is reality, I say, and more than most of us deserve. You whine and whimper for immortality beyond space-time? Come home for God's sake, and enjoy this gracious Earth of ours while you can (p. xii) Many but not all participants in DGR similarly eschew interest in supernatural metaphysics. I personally consider such mysteries beyond human ken and at best, an entertaining hobby, and at worst, a waste of perfectly good time.

### **Is the Internet an Animistic communication portal?**

Not directly, if animism is understood as an ability to empathetically or spiritually imagine communicate or commune with another living thing, for this would involve an organic process, a relation between two organisms (whatever else might be involved). To the extent the internet encourages people to cultivate an animistic perception, whether in a naturalistic form (based on science or one's own anthromorphic moral imagination) or spiritually (through some explicitly religious ritual or other means), then it could have an indirect role in promoting animism.

### **How does rock music influence DGR?**

There are many musicians, working in many genres including rock & roll, who express dark green religious themes in their music. On the website where I am developing [supplementary materials](#) to complement my book, focusing especially on sound, moving pictures, and other graphics, I've put some of the best examples of dark green religion in a section there entitled [Favorites \(media & more\)](#).

### **How is alchemy a force in the growth of DGR?**

In the book I assert that the DGR is an increasingly influential global phenomenon, and if I am right, then readers will be able to think of their own examples of it. Maybe alchemy is such an example I have not thought of in this regard. Alchemy has had much to do with nature, science, philosophy, and the quest for wisdom, but I would need to know

more about the specific expression of it to judge whether it has dark green manifestations.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion? If so, who are the players?**

I think a good deal of the global sustainability movement resembles religion in general and dark green religion in particular, and in my book, I provide many examples to this effect.

### **How long do humans have until the Earth resources are out of balance?**

Well, I prefer not to speak of living things as resources, which is something I learned from those pioneering dark green religion. But if we compare studies like Limits to Growth, which was published in 1972, and the trends in the following decades, as some scientists have done, it is clear human beings are already outstripping the bio-capacity of the ecosystems upon which they (and other life forms) depend.

### **What POV's can you give us about how DGR views population control?**

Most participants in DGR criticize the idea that human beings are exempt from the laws of nature. One such law is carrying capacity, a principle that recognizes that the number of organisms a habitat can support depends the amount of available water and food. Consequently, reducing human numbers is a common prescription to both social inequality and declining biological diversity for most of those who have affinity with dark green spirituality.

### **Can DGR impact the mechanism of Darwinian evolution?**

Today the evolutionary future is intertwined with human culture. Consequently, we need to speak of and understand the dynamics of bio-cultural evolution. I argue in my book that DGR today may presage a global, civic earth religion, which could decisively shape the personal and planetary future. Whether or not it is successful will influence evolution, indeed, the very sorts of biological evolution our cultures will allow to continue.

### **What aspects of Quaker faith in practice support DGR development? Why can't the Quakers be the dark green church right now?**

There are people in the world's predominant religious traditions that have affinity with much if not all of the perceptions common in dark green religion. Among mainstream Protestants, my hunch would be that Unitarians and Quakers would be the traditions with the highest proportions of participants who have such affinity. This is worth further study.

### **Why can't the Earth be worshiped as supernatural?**

It can be and some do. Others venerate the earth and its diverse life forms without attributing anything supernatural to it and its living systems.

### **How does the computer-web channel or build the sacred or nature spirit for individuals and organizations?**

Every medium that conveys such tenets is a means of promoting dark green understandings, values, and actions. When I write in the book about the possibility of DGR going "viral" and creating a social contagion, fostering rapid eco/social change, I certainly have in mind the proliferating ways of human networking and communication (e.g. social networking and new media) which also is proving successful at evading those who wish to enforce antiquated belief and political systems.

### **What are some every day examples of the bonding of spirituality and science in the US?**

Everyday there are scientists, and those who read what can be learned from them, who delight in and wonder at the nature of nature. There are many examples in my book, but for now, check out the Symphony of Science videos at Favorites (media & more) and the NY times essay by Carol Yoon which I have provided at my link examining [DGR in the movie Avatar](#).

## **What is Deep Sustainability?**

Sustainability not only grounded in concern for human beings but in respect and reverence for all life.

## **Is this a battle for the hearts and minds of children? How is the DGR movement building awareness and trust in the youth?**

Some DGR proponents are putting their efforts toward educating youth. A good example I discuss in the book is Jane Goodall and her Roots and Shoots movement. But there are many, many people promoting such values, in schools, museums, parks, and through diverse children-focused media.

## **Are DGR people fearful for the Earth's survival, fearful for the survival of humans, or both?**

Some are, some are not. Some think life will go on just fine however humans fare. Others fear that humans will so precipitate species extinctions that it will be millions of years before the earth's living systems reach anything approaching the biological diversity that existed at the outset of the 20th century.

## **Is fear the main psycho-spiritual driver on the planet now?**

I tend to see environmental and social systems as so complex that I shrink from making such generalizations.

## **Is vegetarianism a major tenant in DGR? What are the hurdles in getting this POV into the main stream?**

It is for some but not others.

Some DGR participants believe vegetarianism is implicit in a reverence for life ethic.

Others think we should reverence foremost ecological processes and the resulting biological diversity, recognizing that predation is a part of the struggle for existence, which accounts for the beauty and fecundity of the world. Thus, with this line of thinking, we should not shrink from being the omnivores that we evolved to be, and would not be, had we not become scavengers and hunters.

Some of those who are not opposed to eating animals in principle, however, decline from eating them in practice. These people consider most modern ways of procuring animal protein (e.g., through industrial agriculture and factory farming) disrespectful and irreverent, as well as degrading to environmental systems.

Also worth comment, to look at the other side of the coin, is that agriculture causes the death of many organisms, both plants and animals, so there is very little eating that does not involve killing. Many of those engaged in DGR recognize this as well. Some of these, then, like the poet Gary Snyder, view both eating and being eaten as a sacrament.

Eating should, therefore, be undertaken seriously and with gratitude, and without self-righteous restraint from eating one form of life over another. It should also be done with full knowledge that we will, if we do not poison our bodies with embalming fluid, eventually nourish other organisms after we die. It is possible, with such a sacramental view, learn to appreciate the proper place that eating each other has in the Circle of Life. I use this phrase for it is precisely the message of the song by this name in the motion picture the Lion King, one of the many forms of art I discuss in my book that expresses a dark green worldview.

## **Has Christianity created a "torn psyche" in its followers has many struggle with the values in ecology vs. the historic guidance and principles in Abrahamism?**

I'm not entirely sure what you mean by a "torn psyche" but it has certainly been difficult and wrenching for many Christians to come to terms with the ascendant ecological/evolutionary worldview. Christians (and others rooted in Abrahamic religions) variously reject this worldview, integrate it (often uncomfortably) with their beliefs in invisible deities and worlds, or shed such beliefs to embrace scientific understandings.

## **Do Christians and DGR people have the same spiritual reservoir?**

That's beyond my ken but I doubt it.

## **Is Christianity and DGR irreconcilable? Do you see a fight between groups in these camps for hearts and minds and dollars?**

Thinking very long term I think they will prove to be irreconcilable. Christianity has traditionally perceive the most sacred place to be above and beyond the world, dark green religion considers the biosphere, and anyplace full of life, to be the most holy of places. It's not impossible, perhaps, and some are trying, to reconcile DGR and Christianity, but it is clearly difficult to reconcile a view that the sacred surrounds us and we belong to it with a tradition that has avers that the sacred is above and beyond the world. These views are already in contention for hearts, minds, and the resources these hearts and minds control.

## **What are the effects of the commercialization / commoditization on the sacred and dark green values in general? Like eco-tourism, ski areas and sustainable communities?**

It's complicated: some effects are positive, some are negative, and most is difficult to quantify. Does dark green spirituality expressed in motion pictures or theme parks produce more sustainable practices than it costs environmental systems? We don't have models to assess such effects.

## **Can the "mysterious forces of Nature" simply be seen as an artificial construct of humans? What is real here?**

That our experiences and perceptions of nature are mediated through culture does not mean there is no nature apart from contested human understandings of it. If humans are a part of nature, that we naturally influence environmental systems does not mean there is no nature apart from human constructions of it. This kind of thinking that underpins the question, in my view, reflects the kind of anthropocentric hubris that participants in dark green spirituality tend to reject.

## **Please give us a few hot green prophecies.**

I'm empirically oriented and skeptical of most prophecies, especially any that are religion-tinged. I will say that the accumulating scientific evidence is that the 21st and 22nd centuries will be a very hard time for our species and involve a substantial decrease in human numbers.

Meanwhile, we will likely drive millions of other species to extinction while continuing to reduce the range and viability of the populations of many more. It is likely that through most of this process human beings, in the struggle for survival, will not behave very well, at least according to current standards we call human rights. There is, nevertheless, a chance that our species will, in the midst of or in the wake of this suffering, realize that we should be doing everything possible to protect the earth's remaining diversity, decide to cooperate, and learn afresh the meaning of planetary manners.

My thoughts here are not so much predictions as scenarios. Evolutionary theory teaches there is no pre-ordained end of the process. What is to come, then, depends largely on what the earth's currently dominant animal does in the coming decades.

## **DGR folk are a "mixture of instinct, observation and tribal wisdom." (p. 206) Can you develop each of the three terms more, please?**

Regarding the two previous questions, I need to refer you and your readers to the book as this is much of what I was unpacking in it and I don't have the time or space to repeat that work here.

## **Say that I want to build-up the DGR POV in LinkedIn.com? How would you suggest I go about it?**

Well, I'm not very sophisticated in these areas but one thing the book does is show widely scattered people, who resonate with the feelings and ideas of those in the book, that there are many people like them, all around the world. As best I am able I will put additional information on my website and hopefully a blog to come, where people can be in contact who want to talk about what is in it. But I've noticed people don't need me to do this and that a [Facebook](#) group focused on "Dark Green Religion" has already formed. And there are many other places where people with such sentiments are gathering and collaborating. So, maybe, this is a small sign that such ideas are ripe for spreading through the new media proliferating today.

**One thing I want from the book is a "launch plan" or How to manual on building the DGR movement. Is this coming?**

If I, or any others involved in DGR, knew what prescription might reverse the current destructive trends, believe me, we'd be doing them and would be calling others to do so. Unfortunately, there is no clear path from here to some future dark green utopia.

I think what the book shows, however, is that there are many actors and organizations who are motivated by dark green perceptions and who are trying to spread ideas and practices that cohere with it. It shows they are having a significant influence and positive impact.

It shows that people can participate in this global movement by uniting their talents anywhere they think it is possible to make a difference, and that they thereby do so, at least in small ways. If a large enough impact can be made, in time to avert catastrophe, it will be through the cumulative effect of all these actors. They might just precipitate a tipping point toward a widespread change in consciousness and behavior. This is as hopeful as I can be. As profound and rapid as the growth and influence of DGR has been, however, it is difficult to be optimistic when one compares that influence with the ongoing, global rate of bio-cultural simplification.

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## **Ed Begley, Jr., Actor, Eco-Futurist**

### **Spokesperson for Grey Water Recycling Systems**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1506>

#### **Who owns water Ed?**

WE (the people) are supposed to own the water, but we have surrendered many of those rights to large agricultural interests that are not always acting in OUR best interests. I'm all for agriculture, but I don't think it's prudent to grow thirsty crops like cotton and rice in an arid climate such as the San Joaquin Valley

#### **What are the three quickest ways to get humans to reduce their residential water consumption?**

1. Recycle their gray water.
2. Use aggressive common sense in overall water use.
3. Raise water prices.

#### **What are the costs and environmental impacts to install and maintain a gray water system?**

A system like mine costs \$6,850 not including installation. The first years maintenance supplies are included and after that, annual maintenance cost for materials runs \$402. While it's easier to maintain than a swimming pool, if one wanted they could hire an outside contractor for servicing. The environmental impact is water conservation. If you have large irrigation needs and a family producing sufficient amounts of gray water you could see a 50% or greater reduction in your water usage.

#### **How do ReuseGrayWater.com systems work with current waste water utilities?**

The system is separate and in addition to your existing sewer system. It is a source point water recycling system that operates fully automatically.

#### **Are you promoting going "off-grid" so to speak?**

My system does not provide drinking water so unless you have your own private supply of water for drinking, bathing and washing clothes you'll never be "off the grid" water wise. But you will totally eliminate your reliance on municipal drinking water for irrigation.

#### **How is the definition and public perception concerning grey water changing?**

I suspect there are those who have reservations on using water they have bathed with or washed their clothes in to water their lawns. I also suspect those reservations will lessen as the cost of water increases and the supply decreases. The water my system recycles is safe and bacteria free by virtue of its ultra violet disinfection process. All water is recycled water at some point in the history of the planet.

#### **What are the current institutional barriers to sustainable water use?**

By institutional I suspect you mean governmental. Every city will have its own building department who may need to approve a gray water recycling system. I've yet to hear of any city that did not support the reuse of gray water, however they need to "fit" the system into their existing permit and code requirements. Some are more difficult to work with than others, but by in large, most see the benefit and support it. We have yet to receive a permit decline from any city. I will say, there are a number of those who have installed systems without permits and are safely and happily recycling water.

**Please walk us through a residential grey water system from [Grey Water Recycling Systems](#). What are some of the greentech breakthroughs?**

Briefly, shower and laundry water is filtered by micron bags, anthracite coal and activated coconut carbon. Then it's disinfected by exposure to ultra violet light and stored in a tank. When needed, it's automatically delivered for irrigation use. There are some unique filtration techniques and proprietary systems used that I don't fully understand but the end result is a source point system that lets me safely reuse shower and laundry water for our gardens.

### **How do you weigh in on the Sacramento Delta fix? Why should NorCAL produce water for SoCAL?**

We certainly need water in Southern California, and it is a region without enough water for the amount of growth that has occurred here over the years, but I can sympathize with the folks in other parts of the country (and yes, in other parts of this state!) who are tired of us dipping our very long straw in their glass. Solution: We must use less water, a LOT less starting now!

### **Is water the next source of war on the planet?**

Water provides economic stimulation, growth and stability. The ability to be more self sufficient by allowing agriculture and raising livestock for a reliable food supply. When people don't have the basics for survival they turn to other means. The East Coast of Africa is one of the driest regions in the world. While I find the actions of the Somali Pirates abhorrent, they might not be doing what they are if they had adequate supplies of water, ...Trying to survive in a very hostile, water starved area brings out the worst in people.

### **Why isn't grey water tech the next big thing in America?**

People's awareness is growing, especially in areas affected by drought. I suspect it's a lot like the price of gas. For the general public to become fully engaged they need to wait in line for an hour to fill up their tank or pay \$4 a gallon. In many parts of the country we're there already, water rationing is in effect, in others we're only one dry winter away from serious shortages.

### **Do you drink bottled water? Is this a scam industry overall?**

I stopped drinking bottled water years ago. It is much more expensive than gasoline, and the regulations are much less strict than the water flowing from your tap. It also comes at a great environmental cost. I have a [Lifesource](#) whole house filter and a [KYK water ionizer](#) and my home tap water tastes great.

### **Rainwater capture sounds promising! What needs to happen?**

You need to have the right site for it to capture enough rainwater to really make it worth your while. A tank holding 5,000 gallons or more would be required to store enough water to make it cost effective. I'm capturing rain water now with my GWRS system, which is another advantage of the system – its ability to do both gray water and rain water recycling at the same time. I wish I could have a larger storage tank. We need to do it ALL! Graywater, Rainwater, Conservation.....now!

**c/o Greg Glass**  
greg@bciitv.com

## Ashfaq Ishaq, Chairman, International Child Art Foundation

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1522>

### What can we learn from children and their art?

The vision of the International Child Art Foundation is to create a world that nurtures children's innate creativity, fosters their intrinsic empathy, and includes children's voices in any deliberation on the future. ICAF is a pioneer in creating public awareness about children's creative and empathic development and an effective advocate for the rights of children to be creative and empathic. Towards this end, ICAF organizes the Arts Olympiad globally, hosts the World Children's Festival every four years, publishes the [ChildArt magazine quarterly](#), launches Peace through Art Programs and Healing Arts Programs occasionally, and arranges art exhibitions internationally.

**Neuroscientific research has shown that creative process involves both sides of the brain. New research is furthering an understanding of how creativity and empathy are key attributes of successful learners and leaders. ICAF employs the power of children's art, both painting and digital, to nurture children's innate creativity and intrinsic empathy. Interrelationships between art + technology, art + sport, art + science, and art + peace are revealed to develop the whole child for the 21st century.**

ICAF is all about elevation of children's artistic expressions and their voices. ICAF advocates that every contemporary art museum dedicate one room to the living art of children; that at least one percent of available wall space in corporate offices be devoted to children's art; that every city must be a city of children where their concerns are mobilized and addressed; and that any deliberation on the future – be it a local, national or global platform – include the voices and concerns of children.

**As a result of its innovative global programs and dedication to the next generation, ICAF serves as a trusted intermediary between networks of creative professionals and the world of creative children.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **How does International Child Art Foundation reflect your inner Child today?**

ICAF is now fourteen years old – energetic in its work, exploratory in its attitude, and explosive in its impact. But it still a little charity that needs nurturing and sustenance. At its birth ICAF was perhaps my inner child. Now it is the inner child of the children we work with and whom we have helped. This organization is meant to be for the next generation. We are only the gardeners.

### **Do you have insights into how we can teach kids sustainability values?**

I don't like the word 'teach' anymore. We can co-create sustainability with children. The future belongs to them and they should protect it. They have to come up with creative ideas earlier generations have not imagined. I see them as leaders. It is not surprising that the environment, sustainability and health are the themes of the opening day of the 3-day World Children's Festival we host every four years on The National Mall in DC.

### **What impacts do you see from social networks and smart gear on kids?**

- Social networks can be informative can inspire. But which one to trust?
- We have learned the importance of shared experiences for children.
- When they meet at the festival and have opportunity to co-learn and co-create, then they can virtually collaborate with each other for the remainder of their lives.
- We also try to introduce smart gear to them at the festival.

### **Do grandparents still play a vital role in children's lives?**

We have grandmothers bringing their grandchildren to the festival so they can play and learn together and have fun. Such shared experiences get etched into a child's neurons. Later when the child recalls this experience, she also remembers her grandmother and her guidance and advice. But if children live far away from their grandparents, they cannot benefit from the first hand and familial trans-generational transmission of knowledge.

I must add that grandparents can also have harmful impact if they cannot resist poisoning their grandchildren's minds with prejudice and baseless beliefs. Our Peace through Art Programs aim to reduce the trans-generational transmission of trauma and hatred.

### **Describe the new kids symbols and stories from the events you have sponsored?**

What we deal with, and what we believe is most powerful, is the art created by children. These works are symbols of childhood in our era. More importantly, these works foretell the imagination of the future.

What children produce at the World Children's Festival for example are murals. Children from different socio-cultural, religious and national backgrounds work together to co-create art. Our underlying objective is that the art they co-create should be so amazing that each one of them realizes that he or she could never produce it on his or her own. To achieve this objective children must understand each other and develop empathy for each other.

We train them for at least one full day with bonding exercises and other techniques. At their World Festivals the murals that the children have co-created are iconic and truly amazing. These include very large murals (16x24-foot) like the "America Mural" and the "World Mural" as well as smaller 3x4-foot masterpieces.

### **Is there a strong global mythic base supporting change in the world today?**

I think there is a growing awareness, or so I hope. People realize that we don't only live in an imperfect world, we made it so. Some try to fix it, others despair because they cannot. Our experience working with children over the past 14 years and in nearly 100 countries reveals that creativity and empathy may be the keys, not only in raising our consciousness but also our collective ability to address the critical issue we confront today.

The children are the best examples. They are least afraid of change, far less cynical and seldom hypocritical. Change and new opportunities excite them and fuel their imagination. They need direction, but if the adults are themselves lost, the children can become misdirected.

### **Is Earth Day now a mythic event? How?**

We have participated in the Earth Day celebrations which are interesting can be inspirational. In the least it is reaffirming to see hosts of individuals expressing their affection for Mother Earth. But Earth Day is not a mythic event, at least not in Washington, DC. A mythic event is magical like the Burning Man for adults and the World Children's Festival for families.

## Laodan, Post-modernist Artist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1529>

### Communiqué 1 -

I visited PlanetShifter.com. Great site. I'm interested in your Survival Guide to 2010.

I personally write about worldviews (animism, religions & philosophies, modernity and what comes after modernity). It is my personal understanding that visual arts are nothing else than the illustration of the shared worldview of the men of knowledge of the day (my blog [Crucial Talk](#) and my book [Artsense](#)).

But, oh paradox, visual artists' search for the shared worldview of the day during the last century ended up in total confusion. The individual atoms in high modern societies do indeed not share a common worldview any longer and most visual artists having not receive the basic knowledge to fill the gap are left without any compass to find their way towards sense and by late modernity on the level playing field of the market for ideas the content behind ideas has been completely hijacked by the marketeers...

We all sense vaguely that late modernity is accompanied by the sprouting of the first seeds of what comes after modernity. The green meme is without any doubt related to such seeds and your [Survival Guide to 2010](#) refers to that in:

- Chapter 3. [Is Sustainability a Religion?](#)
- Chapter 6. [The Shaman in Our Musical Universe](#)
- Chapter 7. [Green Symbols and Myth Making](#)

I sense that those chapters relate to the worldview of "what comes after modernity" which is the subject of my writing and my painting. Always open for further chatting on the subject.

### Communiqué 2 -

Wow! It sounds as if I was actually flowing along the same wavelength as PlanetShifter.com and for sure I'm always open to chat with people who are on the same wavelength. I'm starting to read your Survival Guide to 2010. Great work.

While having been living most of my life, in Europe and in China, along the green meme I come now to value more deeply the search for "what is reality?" in the sense of the wisdom contained in worldviews (those stories, that give form in our individual minds to what is reality, that glue us all in a societal grouping).

In our present day late modernity we don't share any longer a common worldview that's why our societies are fragmenting and atomizing which by the way is the sign that late modernity is somehow the end of the area of modernity.

Life is a dance between its polarities constituted by the individual atoms and their groupings. When colliding their opposite nature generates bursts of energy that power the reproduction of life. So both polarities are necessary to reproduce life.

- **Societies die out when their individual atoms each go it their own way.**
- **Not inserted in a societal grouping the individual atoms fail to reproduce their humanity and are dying out.**

Seen from this perspective we better understand the conundrum that humanity painted itself during modernity. And in the midst of societal atomization we also better understand how our search for other individual particles that flow along the same wavelength acts like a retribalization (societal reconstitution).

But then which tribes are going to survive over the long haul?

Best,  
Laodan

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Paintings by Laodan-**

[Image One](#)

[Image Two](#)

[Image Three](#)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Who are the visionary thinkers / creators of the post-modernity era?**

All the sages along human history. The shaman who helped their brethren under animism. Lao Tzu, Buddha Gautama and others who projected animism as the further worldview of their respective agricultural societies. Nearer to us Carlos Castaneda for showing us that there are other ways of understanding reality and to act on reality. But also the numerous late modern sages, many of them anonymous, who try to show us that the modern and also the religious worldview are no more than illusions projected in our minds by the societal powers of the day.

Leonardo Da Vinci, Kandinsky, Masson, Hundertwasser for their critical thinking about art.

### **Has capitalism “eaten itself?” What can you tell us about the unsustainable strategies of the “marketeers?”**

Let's first precise the historical context. Modernity is a worldview that has been fostered by the logic of capital upon Western Europeans without their knowing about it.

What I mean to say is that the logic at work in capital, over centuries of sparse practice (crusades till end of seventeen century), imposed itself not only to the merchants but also to the scientists, innovators and then the philosophers. The logic of capital was seen to provide its holders with financial success. It attracted thus more and more admirers and greed freed from religious constraints has been acting as oil on that fire. The logic of capital is certainly rational, for capital itself, and for capital holders. But that rationality was not emerging out of concern for societies nor for the individuals. It was only emerging out of the necessity for capital to reproduce itself and to develop.

The logic of capital was thus completely exogenous to humanity's concerns and it remains so to this very day. That our activity is eventually destroying life conditions on earth does not matter so much than reproducing the capital base and continuing to develop it. Our present predicament illustrates that mechanism at length.

Science and the scientific method emerged for no other reason than the need for capital to grow. Capital finances science hoping to generate returns. What does not interest capital does not get financed! The acting principle is endogenous to the concerns of humanity and what concerns humanity is thus permanently shoveled to the dustbin.

Let's now come back to the present times. In the seventies big capital holders observed that once societies were industrialized economic growth declined and eventually disappeared altogether as a possibility. They devised a two prongs strategy to unleash unbound future growth:

- **globalization of the reach of capital to the whole world.**
- **financialization of the economy or favoring paper modeling over real productions.**

The motivation of that strategy was without any doubt exogenous to the concerns of humanity. What mattered was the unbound potential for developing the existing capital base.

As a direct result from the eighties till today increased debt levels financed the economic growth of Western countries. Most economists went along and saw no problems with national debt levels reaching multiples of GDP while history nevertheless witnessed repeated economic crashes accompanying debt levels overtaking their historical mean. But then came 2007 and the tax payer was called to the rescue... In the meantime globalization had destroyed Western traditional productions and services have to pay for other services ...through emission of more debt.

To answer your question; no capitalism has not eaten itself it has eaten humanity. Today there remains only the logic of capital. Humanity has lost its vital springs and is waiting with apprehension for what comes next.

### **What is your dream / view of the post-modernity era? When does / did this start?**

That word has been used and re-used to the point of losing any meaning. For that reason I now mostly use the expression "what comes after modernity".

Obviously that can only start after most of humanity has slipped into modernity. (the illusion of individualism, private ownership through the lull of the individuals into consumerism away from their previous economic autonomy and all this happening through the application of the logic of capital to all aspects of people's daily lives.) What comes after modernity is not circumscribed to the West (less than 10% of the world population). This is a global shift involving 100% of the world population due in large part to the de-multiplication of the level of our aggression against nature.

- Our use of resources is simply unsustainable (peak oil, peak phosphorous, water, etc ...). We'll most likely end up in the coming years in national fights over the meager resources still available.

- Our dumping of by products in nature is rapidly shifting its balance which is no problem for nature itself but is deadly for most life forms (climate change, poisoning of the oceans, of our drinking water, etc...) All those factors are slowly collapsing the economic feasibility of life on earth as usual and no amount of good will or green activism is going to change that equation. James Lovelock is probably right that "Humans Are Too Stupid To Prevent Climate Change"...

The most likely outcome of the de-multiplication of the level of our aggression against nature is societal collapse. (life muddles through but everything is changed thereafter).

The passage from modernity to what comes after modernity is decidedly not going to resemble the passage from an animist worldview under an economy of hunter-gathers to a religious worldview under an economy made up of agriculture nor is it going to resemble the passage from a religious worldview to the modern worldview and its industrial economy. Both those societal changes brought more food and more stuff which resulted in population growth and larger societal institutions. This time around humanity is not going to have more.

It is going to have less, substantially less, the world population is going to collapse to more sustainable levels and its societal institutions are going to shrink (a federation of tribes?). This all sounds so dramatic and pessimistic. But it is not. What comes after modernity, I sense, is societal change driven by a worldview that we can already feel is starting to emerge nowadays. It is still early and only sporadic first shoots can be observed. But there is no doubt in my mind that what comes is a worldwide worldview presenting reality as an organic process of change.

Reality as an organic process of change is the content of my visual signs.

### **How does your art reflect e drama / solutions / human emotion on a global scale?**

My visual signs have changed a long time following my changing understanding of reality and the human adventure. I now come to understand visual arts as being "visual signs of the worldview of the men of knowledge of the day" (I describe in my book *Artsense* that it has been so since the dawn of times, only to be interrupted for a short 20th century but we are now coming back to the historic fundamentals). In such a view the content of the work is the reason of the work. My description of "what comes after modernity" posits reality as an organic process of change. I find this description of reality to be very stimulating. It centers on a positive outlook which begs for a finely crafted form that denotes beauty.

If I believe that content is the reason of a visual sign I also believe that a work of art has to be beautiful. Why is this?

The fact that we are here, as the result of a zillion changes resulting from as many zillion chaotic moments that were followed each time by the selection of one only of the future possibilities present. that is simply the most astounding of ideas and also the summit of beauty. Evolution is the selection of a near infinity of winning possibilities. All the possibilities that have been selected were winning propositions and as such they each denote beauty which means that their characteristics (lines, forms, colors, sounds,...) reflect a pattern of beauty.

The opposite can be said of all the losing possibilities. Their characteristics reflect a pattern of ugliness that has no place in a work of art. The content of the art work is its reason. The DNA code of all life forms contains the memory of each and every evolutionary step. There can thus be no better guide than the characteristics and patterns of evolution to guide the form of the content of an art work. A form based on such evolutionary patterns has the maximum chance to make a deep impression on the viewer.

### **What is the power in what you call the "green meme?"**

I discovered the concept in [Nova Spivak's blog](#). (a cultural item that is transmitted by repetition in a manner analogous to the biological transmission of genes.) The green meme has been replicating along the last decades as a parasitic code, a virus of the mind especially contagious to children and the impressionable. But it has by now lost any meaningful significant. It's fashion to speak "green". Even the Economist Magazine... Aargh! My seventies green activism in Europe was driven by the dream to change the world. The world invaded our dream but the world did not change!

### **Retribalization? What is this?**

The worldview of modernity is framed entirely around the logic of capital and as such is totally exogenous to humanity's concerns. But after having weakened the religious worldview modernity failed dramatically to set forth its own narrative about "what is reality?". Instead of letting the citizens share in a common modern narrative that could have glued them in modernity they were proposed the level playing field of the market for ideas where sages, intellectuals and all kinds of charlatans are left to battle for eyeballs. The direct consequence of the failure by modernity to supply a shareable worldview narrative has been societal fragmentation and with the intrusion of the internet the fragmentation reached its apex in atomization when individuals are left to share their ideas only with themselves and banalities with others.

Extreme societal fragmentation or atomization leads to shizophreny. Being feeble humans feel at a loss to make sense of reality, of themselves, and in desperation for having to endure their shizophreny they desperately search for the comfort of assembling with other like minded individuals. This is what I call retribalization. Part of it is positive but the mass of it is just human waste.

I feel that the more advanced the level of societal collapse the more necessary retribalization will appear for survival.

### **Is sustainability like a religion? ([ref](#))**

I personally believe that all living species are governed by a set of immutable rules:

- **without a community the individual can't reproduce and dies out.**
- **without a dose of individualism the community is bound to stagnate and then to collapse.**

Modernity departed from this idea to balance the tension between individuals (atoms) and community (grouping) and favored individual enterprise over societal cohesion. The balance of the tension between those two polarities within all living species seems to act as the ticking clock on their evolutionary roads.

Societal cohesion has been provided since immemorial times by the sharing of a common worldview by all the members of a group. A worldview is a founding story, a story about reality and how we fit in it. Religions are worldviews but all worldviews are not religions.

There is a widespread confusion that needs to be cleared in order to make sense in any discussion relating to religion and philosophy.

First about religion. The etymology of the word religion originates in the Latin word "religare", which means "to tie, to bind". This implies that religion acts as societal glue. But if religion acts as societal glue it must necessarily be connected to political power.... Now if we observe religion from the viewpoint of the long history it is abundantly clear that religion arose as a tool of early kingdoms in their quest to preserve their power over their subjects. But why in the world was it so? The answer lays in the early kings' observation that the physical force of their armies was insufficient to guarantee their continued control over their subjects. Armies were moving on foot and once in a corner of the kingdom to quell an insurgency they were unable to move timely to another corner to quell another. Successful kings were those who observed that they needed to glue the psyche of their subjects into obedience to maintain their power...

About philosophies. The etymology of the word philosophy originates from the Greek word "philosophia" (philo-loving and sophia-skill-wisdom) which translates as "search for a general understanding of reality".

So how do religion and philosophy relate to each other?

Logic implies that philosophy comes first. Religion is, indeed, the accession of one philosophy to the status of imposed system of belief within a given society. In other words one specific philosophic system, among many others, is being catapulted in a position of "power belief" by the rulers of a given society and with time that particular philosophic system will be internalized in the minds of the subjects of that society as being the unique and absolute truth.

Coming back to your question "Is sustainability like a religion?"

**Well no it isn't. It's more like one chapter in the description of a philosophy. But where is the philosophy?**

Wishing you well.

[Laodan](#)  
[Blog](#) | [Art](#)

## Sara McCamant, Gardener

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1536>

Growing up in a yard full of wild and wooly plants got the dirt into Sara's blood and love of plants into her heart. After finishing college studying political theory she decided to get grounded in more real things by working on a farm in Santa Cruz. Four years of harvesting lettuce and weeding long rows got her thinking about the beauty of the garden. She moved to Mendocino County and spent the next 7 years running an educational garden at Shenoa Retreat Center. From there she moved to Emerald Earth, an intentional community in the hills above Boonville. There she mixed permaculture and intensive food production to grow food for the community.

She has worked closely with many chefs and specializes in gardens that are connected to a kitchen. For three years she ran the gardens at the Boonville Hotel and currently she works at [Lynmar Estate](#), a winery in Sebastopol. She hosted a farming and gardening radio show on [Mendocino Public Radio](#) for over 8 years. Most of her gardening has been in public, educational food gardens.

Strongly committed to the Local Food Movement, she has actively worked with many organizations promoting good food and farming. She helped start the West County Community Seed Bank here in Sonoma county and is involved with Transition Sebastopol and iGROW Sonoma.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Can you mediate while working the garden?

I assume you mean meditate. I love this Rumi Quote: **"Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground."** so yes my gardening is a meditation and is one of hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground, which I take to mean to worship. Now what is meditation is another question, I can find a meditative state when I work in the garden that keeps me completely in the present and also keeps me in relationship with and with deep awareness of all that is around me. I am not always in that state though, usually I am busy thinking about all the details of what I need to do and then something will give me a little reminder to notice and be present.

### What's your favorite vegetable? Why?

Well that changes by the season, right at this moment my favorite plant is a crimson flowering fava bean, it is absolutely beautiful, it will be food, it feeds the soil by fixing nitrogen, and it is rare and on the Renewing America's Food Tradition's list (RAFT). The thing I love to grow and eat the most is probably winter squash. It sustains me through the winter. But then again kale (Red Russian) feeds me year round, is chock full of nutrients, is beautiful, and takes so little work and puts out so much food.

### What are most important common values throughout the organizations that you work with?

I work with several organizations: West County Community Seed Bank, Transition Sebastopol, and iGROW- all of these promote sustainability through community, health and local food. They all have different focuses but the common theme is gardens, food and local resilience.

### How do you define localization?

Localization is the process of creating a community that can sustain itself mostly from local resources. It is a process not a final state. It includes inventory and evaluation of where we are now, and the support and creation of systems and enterprises that bring things closer to home. There are many areas to look at food, energy, health, culture, education, and transportation are some.

### What stands out when you think about [DailyActs.org vision](#)?

I love Daily Acts- and the vision that what we do every day and sometimes the little steps can make the change we need. We cannot be part time activists to create a better world, we have to live it and breath it and it has to be part of our every moment. I feel like Daily Acts vision is based in that. I also like that it is about creation not just resistance.

**How do you balance time online with time offline? How often do you write your blog with Wendy?**

I am a mostly an off line person, I work as a gardener so I leave in the morning and am unplugged all day. I usually don't even work with my cell phone. Most of the organizing of the 350 Garden Challenge is on line and with email communications so these last few months have found me more online than I ever have been. I really don't think being on the computer for more than an hour or two is healthy. I feel much better after a day with my hands in the dirt than when I am at a keyboard all day. I write a blog for iGROW about once a month, Wendy and I switch off every two weeks.

**How many different types of gardens do you expect to see created for the [350 Garden Challenge](#)? Does a "window sill crop" count?!**

I think there might be as many different gardens as there are people- everyone adds their own personal touch to their garden. But we are talking about a wide range from wine barrel or container plantings, raised bed annual vegetables, sheet mulching a whole lawn and installing perennial fruits and vegetables, drought tolerant plantings, gray water gardens, and urban farms. This is an event with soft edges about what is included we want everyone to feel empowered and excited about what they want to bring to the table whether it is a pot of herbs on their apartment balcony or someone taking out 600 sq feet of lawn for a permaculture food forest. The main guidelines are food and /or water wise.

**What do think Transition Sebastopol's 'building community resilience' means? Can you give us an example?**

I really was drawn to the word resilience in the Transition work. It means that a community can survive and thrive through major change, that the changes that might come like economic melt downs and maybe peak oil will not destroy the community's ability to exist and be healthy. An example would be creating a local food system so that if there were an earthquake, and the supermarkets collapsed, there would still be ways to get food to our communities. I think of it as the ability to bend and adjust and not snap and break with whatever comes our way. I actually am not attracted to this work from a survivalist place and don't put that much energy into peak oil theories because I think community resilience is important no matter what happens, moving toward a sustainable community is good no matter what the future holds.

**Are there good and bad seeds at the West County Community Seed Bank events? How can you tell if a seed has been genetically altered?**

What we ask for is only open pollinated seeds that means no hybrids and [no genetically engineered](#). It is becoming more difficult to grow corn that does not have some GE crossings but if you start with clean seed not much GE corn is grown here in Sonoma you probably can keep it clean.

We have a protocol for seed offered at the seed bank- it needs to come from healthy open pollinated plants, it needs to come from a large enough population that you keep a good genetic mix, we want as much information about where and when it was grown, and you needed to grow it in isolation so it did not cross (if it crosses). Of course if you know nothing about seed saving than all of these things need some explanation. Which is why we have seed saving classes to teach people about how to grow good seed.

**The Seed Bank is a barter deal right? How do you see bartering working in other ways for your community in the future?**

It actually isn't a barter deal, it is free. We offer everything for free, the seeds, the classes, sometimes we offer things like the materials to make seed cleaning screens at cost. We see it as modeling a different economic system based on abundance and sharing. If you have ever saved seeds you know that you end up with more than you would ever need for

your own garden, it only makes sense to share them with your neighbors and friends and hope they will save something different and share them with you.

We offer the seed, and the information and hope you will go home and save some seeds of that or something different and bring it back to the seed bank.

I think bartering or alternative exchange systems are part of a healthy, resilient local economy. There have been some kinks in some the systems that have been created but I think there have been many lessons learned and a few successful models- I think we should give it a try again whether it is a local dollar system or bartering. And move away from the US dollar cash economy.

### **Connections –**

#### **Sara McCamant**

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[igrowsonoma.org](http://igrowsonoma.org)

[transitionsebastopol.org](http://transitionsebastopol.org)

[westcountyseedbank.blogspot.com](http://westcountyseedbank.blogspot.com)

## Joe Russo, Biodigester, ECOregon

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1537>

“Anaerobic digestion (AD) is applicable to a wide range of situations, but synergy is most realized at facilities like Stahlbush Island Farms in Corvallis, OR that: 1) Have access to sizeable organic feedstock at little to no cost; 2) Require electricity and heat which can be provided by a biogas-powered combined heat and power (CHP) unit; and 3) Can utilize the digester effluent as compost, liquid fertilizer and irrigation water. Macronutrients contained in the processing waste, which would have otherwise been exported off site, can be recovered for land application.”

“**Grower Processor Invests in BioGas Plant**”, [Biocycle](#), 01/10

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Can anybody put in a biodigester? Talk about the economies of scale and upfront investment per size and type of implementation.**

The first step to discover if a project is going to be viable would be to perform a feasibility study. An anaerobic digester feasibility study will include an assessment of the companies waste streams and other locally available feedstocks, case study review, methane and electricity yield estimated description of suitable digester technologies, end product usage, utility interconnection and permitting requirements and financial modeling. A summary report containing the findings of the overall conclusions, recommendations and list of resources is then delivered to the client.

The economies of scale are really determined by a few factors. The first is the amount of waste that is available and if the waste has to be purchased or there is a cost involved in the collection and does the waste have a high Biochemical Methane Potential (BMP)? The second is the amount of grants and funding available to a project. A biogas project in one state can be feasible with small amount of tonnage per day if there is a large amount of incentives and grants in that area. If that state or area is not supportive of renewable, it would take an extremely large amount of waste to get a project of the ground.

The third is the ability to use the power that is generated and sell the extra power back to the power company. If you are not able to sell the power back to the power company or if you have a very low Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the power company, the project could have difficulty penciling out.

The upfront investment of the feasibility study on a biogas project is one of the most important factors in determining if a biogas project is financially feasible. There are a number of avenues that can help pay for the cost of the anaerobic digester feasibility that can be perused both on the federal, state and local levels.

### **Can home owners get one? Are there any planning and/or zoning ordinances in the way – city or county?**

A home owner could use the same basic technology to build a small model. One would have to look at both the feedstock (waste) that is going into the anaerobic digester and what can be done with the methane that is produced. Rather than each home owner have an anaerobic digester, it would be better to have a community digester or what is also called a destination digester.

A destination digester would be a biogas plant that the whole community would be able to feed by curb side collection of organic waste. This would add to the amount of feedstock that is going into the biogas plant, thereby increasing the amount of methane that is produced and gaining some economy of scale. Then the community would be able to produce their own electrical and thermal power from fueled by the methane running a CHP unit, essentially making the community self sufficient and off the grid.

### **Who is green certifying anaerobic digestion and biogas systems? Are there competing eco-labels here?**

The digesters themselves are not in any way green certified. However the electrical energy from the methane fueled CHP will get green certified. When the biogas plant is producing power and selling all the power back to the power company, the power company monitors the amount of power that the producer is making. If Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), also known as green tags are involved, there is a company called [Green-e](#)? that is one of the nation's leading voluntary certification programs for many types renewable energy.

### **Are biodigesters considered a closed-system? What are the operational dangers here?**

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is proven technology, immediately available for commercial application from an ample number of qualified vendors with flexible designs. Anaerobic digestion has additional benefits with its positive net energy balance, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the ability to close the loop on nutrients. When implemented properly, AD has the potential to provide energy independence, carbon emission reduction and waste management solutions while producing renewable energy and co-products – a sustainable solution for many farmers, food processors and manufactures, its customers, its community and the planet.

### **Given anything under the sun, what makes the best material to “run” a farm biodigester?**

Co-digestion is important part of the anaerobic digestion and the amount of methane yield. One of the better materials to feed the biogas plant Fats Oil & Greases or FOG, but it again depends on the quality of the FOG. It has been found at times, by adding as little as 5% to annual ryegrass straw (ARS) and dairy manure blend, you may increase methane potential by 60-90% over dairy manure alone.

The best thing to plan of action is always perform a Biochemical Methane Potential (BMP) of the feedstock that are available in the area and then determine the ideal mix. The BMP is an analytical tool that describes the volume of methane that can be produced from a given amount of volatile solid for a particular feedstock.

### **In your view, how is a biodigester part of a larger, sustainable permaculture strategy?**

Keeping any kind of waste out of our landfills and taking advantage of a technology that can be used to benefit the community and the environment. It is about doing the right thing and living in a sustainable world. We need to do what we can when we have the knowledge to make the least amount of impact with our current processing practices.

### **Do you envision a day when the aggregated grain silos alongside the railroad tracks will include be a large community biodigester coop facility?**

I envision a day when every city large or small will take advantage of this technology as part of their strategy to become energy independent. To have a community that has energy security with its peoples support and living a green lifestyle will a robust and healthier community. To me it does not matter how they collect the waste or what we call the resource as long as it is collected and does not have negative impact on the environment. You have to avoid moving or trucking waste over a long distance because there is a point when more energy is used to move the waste than you are generating.

[Joe Russo](#), Sales Associate

[ECOregon](#)

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## Rohaan Solare, Cosmologist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1546>

### Please Play Soundtrack Now- [Ghost of a Chance, Rush](#)

I don't believe in destiny  
Or the guiding hand of fate  
I don't believe in forever  
Or love as a mystical state  
I don't believe in the stars or the planets  
Or angels watching from above  
But I believe there's a ghost of a chance we can find someone to love  
And make it last...

\* \* \* \* \*

### The collective unconscious? Hmm! Please actionize this for the average 12th Grader.

The collective unconscious may be likened to the internet together with all of the repositories of information and computers it is connected to.

The famed psychologist Carl G. Jung coined the term to describe what he thought must exist "in the ethers" in order to support what his learning and experience was revealing to him about the nature of psyche, consciousness and memory. Each one of us has the capacity to consciously access this realm, but only under very particular circumstances. Basically anything or any technique that can induce a trance state enables access. Certain individuals such as psychics are able to access the collective unconscious almost at will. In theory, the collective unconscious is not only a storehouse of all human experience, but also of non-human experience and we may access the past as well as the future.

"The mythologist Joseph Campbell discovered that many of humanity's great myths share the thematic content and common patterns of development."

### What are the most important thematic content and common patterns of development in the Sustainability Age?

Call it what we may, but humanity is at a crossroads of sorts and all indicators point toward great social change. There have been social revolutions in the past, but humanity is now poised for planetary scaled changes. The principle theme of our life time has been and will continue to be transition from the personal to the planetary level. The old ways are not sustainable and much less desirable. I believe our quest is an eco-friendly planetary culture and we are midwives to its birth.

### How do fear and extinction impact our spirit and our ability to [create new stories, symbols and myths](#)?

Fear will suppress some and challenge others to rise above. Perhaps our worst handicap is that we have long forgotten mythos. I would say that the only real novelty we need add to our stories, symbols and myths is that they encompass humanity and be planetary in scope. Universal patterns and sequence of development are timeless, but we must now allow for new costumes and masks.

### How is [Earth Day a new mythology](#)?

It's the beginning of Campbell's Planetary Mythos. We are recognizing that there are limits and that we are a single family.

### Do you think that stories are [language constrained / specific; are myths](#)?

I do not think that the essential and central monomyth is language constrained. Life in one regard is very simple. Modern life and the goal of some groups to intentionally mislead has complicated life and I find that to be the largest road block to the social coherence afforded by myths. The biggest constraint I see is ego-ethnocentrism and the yet to be accounted for cultural dynamic of enculturation.

**Has Christianity created a "torn" psyche" in its followers has many struggle with the values in [ecology vs. the historic guidance and principles in Abrahamism](#)?**

I understand a worldview as a reflection of the internal state of the story teller and the Judeo-Christian story reveals a tortured and torn psyche. Insult is heaped on injury when our political leaders wave the wand of The Cross in order to orchestrate political agendas.

"A holographic universe presumes an underlying order capable of relating everything to everything else and a system to account for what has been, what is and what will be."

**Are you supporting a type of manifest destiny or pre-determinism for homo sapiens? Fate, for all of Earth?**

There is a fair amount of scientific evidence and good arguments for a deterministic universe. Ideas of fate and destiny are ancient and widespread. I believe it is one of the essential questions that we all struggle with. Thus far I do sense and believe that we are all following a script.

**How does [rock music influence the creation of myth](#)?**

Hmm.... I would have to say that it ranges from the negligible to counter-productive.

**Why are alternative nature-based or green religions rising up?**

I would say that the strength of any insurrection would be a measure of felt oppression. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

**Please give us a few hot green prophesies.**

How about some hot green organic peppers instead. Prophecy as I have come to understand it is knowledge of the systematic and cyclical nature of life's themes and patterns of development. I take my clues from the Maya-Meson-American Calendrical System (MMAC), aka the much maligned and misunderstood "Mayan Calendar." When properly understood, MMAC is a measure of cycles and the study of the thematic content associated with each cycle and cycle phase. Presently we are completing a Maya processional cycle of 26,000 ton (25,626 years). In a Maya processional cycle each "season" is 6500 ton (6407) years

December 21, 2012 is the end of a "winter season" and it signals the start of a new "Great Year." We will have reached a galactic solstice of sorts and the trend at least symbolically is towards the emergence of spring. We hear the phrase "Mayan prophecies" yet none exist. The ancient Maya did not leave anything we could construe as prophetic text. We found a stone monument with a date and there is a mural depicting the symbolic birth of a new processional cycle but that's it.

The emergence of new socio-cultural trends are evident and their growth is being fueled by development of the planetary brain---the internet. The promise of an interconnected populace bodes tremendous possibilities for humanity.

**[Is TV killing myth?](#)**

Indeed.... perhaps the greatest hazard to the individual and hence society is the shallow and degenerate content thrust at developing minds. Huge swaths of the population have become addicted to autonomic dopamine discharges. The mainstream media story tell us that our highest glory lies with overindulgence and material acquisition. We have before

us the results of such a story.

### **Instinct vs. Soul. Which one will transform us in this present global crisis? Why?**

I believe that in a idealized state they work in tandem. Survival issues provide motivation for the least aware and I do believe that the critical mass needed to guide those awakening at the last moments are present and at the ready. Billions yearn for less strife and more cooperation. The question is can those billions coordinate their yearnings into a force capable to altering the dominant cultural mode? Soul yearning in the end is what has compelled the critical mass to break out of instinctual patterns and that is where the discoveries are made and the treasures are found. Novelty enters the spirit of those on the hero's journey and they make their way back to deliver their boon.

### **To me, your writing is akin to a new open human code for inspecting and advancing cultural. Fair? What are your professional goals?**

Yes that's a fair description. And you ask a good question. My writing venture is new terrain for me. The art and science of Maya-Meso American calendrics (MMAC) bodes enormous possibilities for the future of humankind. Now let me translate "calendrics" into the Art and Science of Synchronicity and human relationship dynamics and you can understand why I believe it holds so much promise. Every human domain is affected by what the ancient Meso-Americans discovered about nature. My goal is to create a research and educational institute centered around the dissemination and application of the Art and Science of Synchronicity as based upon my understanding of MMAC.

### **Can we create a "critical mass dream" so our [individual dreams can combine and move us](#)?**

The collective dream is taking shape right before our eyes. We've been on auto-pilot for our entire evolutionary period and we are now being forced to wake up and assume a conscious evolution. Our present mission is to recognize that we are undergoing a self-organizing process that now necessitates that we become conscious and responsible our actions-inactions and their consequences. Emerging cultural trends need a banner (mythos) under which to band together. Campbell gave us the biggest clue. We need a planetary scaled mythos pronto.

### **"Who invented circadian cycles?"**

Circadian cycles are life's response to the day-night cycle.

### **"The Tzolkin Code alerts us to the thematic script we are all following and provides us with the full set of instructions permitting us to see just how interconnected and synchronized everything is." Tell us about your work on the Tzolkin Code.**

My work involves showing how Tzolkin Science relates to Western science and in particular to the physics and chemistry branches. Thus far I have shown how the Tzolkin Code shares a one to one relationship with the genetic code. I have also shown how the numbers underpinning the Tzolkin code manifest themselves from the sub-atomic realm of quarks to stars and the code of life itself.

I've done 3 three studies linking pronounced seismic, volcanic and solar activity with certain key Tzolkin cycle days.

I am developing learning modules so the layperson can use Tzolkin knowledge to enrich their day to day lives in a number of ways. I have plans to take the knowledge to organizations and research institutions. Any and all research institutions must be aware of the cycles and how the different cycle phases will affect their research and test results. I am just blowing some dust off the surface at present. I am convinced that the Tzolkin Cycle represents one of the greatest discoveries of all time and bear in mind that it was discovered over 3000 years ago. Needless to say a few lifetimes of work will be needed to fully explore and develop the potential inherent in this magnificent body of knowledge.

### **Many are talking about a major collapse in the world economy and a catastrophic period of anger and hunger. Do you**

**see this near-term scenario? In not, what is your perception of the next 2-5 years on the planet?**

We go through these shake ups every time the sun reaches the most active period of its 11 year cycle. The question is how intense will the shake-up be? Thus far it has already broken records...."the worst depression since the Great depression"--- and sun just started waking up 6 months ago. Solar activity is expected to peak in late 2012 to early 2013. Meaning we "ain't seen nothing yet." We are seeing the prevailing culture falter and the emerging culture surge. As put I put it, the catastrophe is upon us and it's called Western civilization 1.0 gasping for air as it strives to maintain the status quo at all costs. 2012 is fabled as some sort of turning point. Will it be the turning point so many of us are wanting? I say may everyone do their part to make it so sooner than later.

**Is sustainability [like a new religion](#)?**

I see it as an important facet of the new mythos.

**[Emergent Culture](#)**  
**Rohaam Solare**

## **Anna Crozier, Canberra Earth Mapper and Metaphysicist**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1553>

### **You also call yourself Didi Mu in email! Why?**

Didi Mu is the name of my Company.

Didi refers to one of the practices of the Dalai Lama and the Rinpoches. It is their ability to direct light in a laser beam to individuals who may be holding negative thoughts....their quality of love and light is in a compressed, directed, intentional field to navigate the individual out of their discomfort on negative thoughts.

Mu refers to the [ancient Continent that existed between and within the South Pacific seas](#). The atolls that remain are all part of the original Continent that existed between Australia the Americas, Asia Mu is the place of the original root races, all skins, all colors living peacefully....a huge subject. It is language and built form and behavior that are the links to this evidence. The telepathic wizardry that existed then is written up in the book [Whispers of the Waitaha](#) by archaeologist Barry Brailsford.

[ The following interview is based on unreleased email conversations with Anna ]

\* \* \* \* \*

**Hi Willi,**

These are a few observations from my own witness, research and experience. There is still more to research and evaluate, however, these are a few understandings from this nomadic journeying on this rock within our Universe.

### **If insects sing at a different speed, what is the right speed to save the planet?**

It is all about the multiple vibrations of harmonic heart wave coherent light that is self organized.

Nature exists within this sublime diversity of trees, bushes, orchidaceae, vines, and herbaceous plants.

When the balances are right and we are not in the management of chemical persuasions, then the diversity of insect life exists. The sea sings, the Earth sings. All planets have sound lights waves. We need to entice our planet to sing like a bell again. Our internal discord becomes part of Earths discord, her emanation of light waves. Our management practices do need reviewing, reevaluating. We do have 140.000 private companies now with a more enriched view to sustainable environmental practices. We need more groups entering and joining these groups who have the right intention. Every individual has the capacity to make a difference.

### **Are you concerned with ideologies that twist Nature with Science?**

When we observe Mother Nature and the formulas of Mother Nature then we are working with the most effective energetic design for our landscapes, agriculture, architecture and our human ecology.

Nature is physics and sacred geometry so it is a natural science lesson simply to walk within an original forest. When we apply these same formulas to urban planning, landscaping, Biologic Architecture, the children are growing within the physical experience of sacred geometry and all the mathematical harmonics of light waves, space and time waves, the right electrical pulses for their vitality and happiness. Biologic Architect, Michael Rice from Laois in Ireland always speaks about the ratios within Biologic Architecture supporting the soul development of the child.

I feel when we observe the original designs of the Supra Engineer, on and off the planet, then we are able to impart these forms of sustainable energy into our physical structures, our Built Environments. When we achieve these same

symmetries then the body is supported, the designs will impulse the body to maintain the same harmonic mathematical ratios that exist within the design of the physical anatomy. This is Bio Mimicry and it is all about grace and time, sensing it, feeling it within us. These formulas are repeated throughout Earth, throughout the Universe and we only need to be observers to get the story right. The domains of Mother Nature are our most enlightened University.

At the moment throughout so many of our recent cultures we are not applying these formulas and the body is reacting to the wrong co-ordinates, incorrect mathematical scales within urban planning and architecture. We have these expressions of chaos expressed in subtle and not so subtle experiences. When the discord exists in urban planning, it affects behavior, health, thought as these layouts are not conversant with bio mimicry. We are not in the right harmonics of scale. We need to re-evaluate urban layouts and ensure that we include parks, diverse tree species, and bushes, so the orbiting of the natural scales, light waves of Mother Nature exist in an interactive, body supportive atmosphere.

**“The Indigenous races who never left their connection to Earth hear the songlines.” How do these sonic vibrations create mythologies and dreams for your country folk?**

When we move into clearing the toxins and emotional debris from our internal ecology, when we live within the tapestry of the garden and are conscious about listening to Earth, we learn how to empathize with Earth then we feel more and we can sense the leylines or songlines, the vortexes where the leylines meet. This encourages our own system to relax more so we can hear and feel the spirit, song waves within Earth or within the Galaxy. When these personal disciplines are engaged then we enter into more stillness, animation and do not feel separated from the life force within Earth. This phase is a slow patient process.

The re-engagement though leads us to our telepathic, telegraphic, super sensory experiences. Our body will feel this musical ecology and we will receive more inspirational dreams, lucid dreams and very relevant information that will contribute to our daily creative lives. We can be seeded with the right thoughts for identifying solutions, imagery for Earth.

We go beyond our own personal dramas, we let them flow past and move toward contributing to the total experience, whatever way we can. More equilateral financial management and sharing.

**Didn't the golden mean exist before homo sapiens?**

Naturally Earth, the Universe radiate within multiples of golden mean ratios. It is evident everywhere, layers upon layers of the interactive harmonic formulas. Fibonacci Spiral, the Pentagon, the Dodecahedron. It is interlaced, latticed with natural spiraling animated energy. Again, you only need to walk in an original beautiful forest such as the Amazon to experience the radiant velocity of the life force of natural energy that is constantly embedding these light wave formulas.

We can observe the extraordinary variety of structures within the gem fields, all of which are condensed, contained light existing in a specific sacred geometry within Earth. Palladium is one of the rare earth monatomic elements (Platinum family) that is interfaced with gold. It has an inherent dodecahedron as part of its structure. It is one of the bases for levitational technology that was applied in ancient times such as Egypt and earlier periods. If a person holds palladium, empathizes with it, they will feel the very fine, fast spin or life force that is an electrical emission/ Hold the palladium in your hand, close your eyes and feel it, tune into the pulse, it will feel like a breeze within the body.

You can direct it to where you may have tight muscles, it will release them. It impulses the cells back into the whole performance of this matrix and the body will feel 'lighter', happier. You can only smile when you empathize with this element. It is a connector and provides the feelings of the speed of light or the animated space that we can obtain within the physical body. These elements were applied in ancient times to remain telepathically connected to specific star systems.

Traditionally in indigenous cultures, an individual would simply sit next to the medicinal plants or gem fields, move into empathy and absorb the perfect energy, the co-ordinates of the plants sacred geometry and they would heal. We are empathetic beings and our intuitive body is our gyroscope.

### **Are we plasma or light or soil revitalized?**

We are meant to be within a totally diverse, interactive field of harmonic light. All forms are created from light waves, plasma / electrons. The micro organisms of the soil are a meld of vibrational micro to macro light waves, micro to macro sound waves within the light. They have collected the sounds of the cicada and slowed down the audio recording. Everyone experienced blissful music.

The greater the diversity and percentages within soil biology the more life force or electrical value there is within our seeds, flowers, fruits, animals, fiber plants, body. The more we build the soil biology mass with biologic methodologies the more we regain life force within the soil and the atmosphere, within the water of our rivers, our human ecology. Conventional chemical farming has destroyed this life force. The plants responded with predictable cyclical breakdown as the life within the soil was prodigiously destroyed with chemicals.

Deserts arrive from the destruction of this diversity, these percentages of species within soil biology mass. The soil sings when we increase these populations, it returns to the most natural enriching fragrance. UC - Berkeley is counting more than 600.000 species of micro organisms within a small area now after applying specific biology soil methodologies. Dr. Elaine Ingham, micro biologist from The Soil Food Web Institute has been a major driver to move agriculturalists back into the solutions for chemically free, biologic soil solutions. She has developed 7 labs around the world and defining through live microscopy this significant difference. She provides economically effective soil biology strategies for farmers and gardeners so they can become chemically free and contribute enlivened sustainable soils for food, fiber and the human organism. Adapting these soil solutions not only in agricultural landscapes but urban landscapes does need promotion and lobbying action with Regional Councils.

Agriculturalists who are applying these biologic methods are experiencing the singing soil again. They are obtaining chemically free enlivened soils and their own lives are revitalized. Those who have gone from conventional chemical farming methods will all acknowledge how their own physiology, their health broke down dramatically with heavy industrial poisoning. The health of their animals predictably broke down and the chemical bills were extraordinary. When they transited and committed to the natural biologic soil systems they regained their own health and vitality again.

### **Are you claiming that DNA is condensed light?**

The bones, the body, the DNA is about condensed light and conveyance of light. It is interfaced. The bones will break down due to heavy emotions or discordant light waves. It can be nutrition, thought, heavy industrial chemicals, atmospheres filled with chemicals, textiles imbued with manufacturing chemicals. Drugs.

William McDonough architect, chemist, author of Cradle to Cradle identifies in his You Tube presentation identifies more than 8000 chemicals in the manufacturing of textiles. The most polluting industry on our planet. These chemicals enter into the body and disrupt the energy within the respiratory system, lungs, skin, and liver. In this process the body is also subject to viruses and cancer.

A discordant wave or a harmonic wave. We have choice on this. When we discipline ourselves and focus on a peaceful interior ecology, select biologic food source and create biologic natural fiber, animal and plant, then we are moving into greater sustainability. We require less as what we eat or wear is holding more energy, the right matrix of heart wave harmonics from the original sourcing and production of food or fiber, built environments, urban planning.

I understand that the DNA is an image/audio information relay system. Our eyes are made of light and when we transmit information to someone we do not necessarily need our voice. A look will say everything. We also have the capacity to heal each other over great distances through intention, silent light language and imagery embedded in light. As we focus and direct our intention we emit laser beams that convey this to the person or to a land area for healing.

We need to ensure that our inner matrix is singing with the complete heart harmonic waves so we are emitting the symmetry of embedded fields of light waves.

The limbic brain or sentient brain interfaces the thalami and the optic pathway. Our emotions impact on our eyesight if we are running a negative passion and not a positive, animated field unencumbered by heavy duty emotion. This is called kinetic intelligence. Intelligence based on the quality of the interior light wave matrix. The animated vibration of right love and compassion embedded within the light waves and all language, silent or expressed.

We have indigenous communities who have never lost their telepathic faculties and remain practicing today, they convey images, language with the interior eye and are continually resourcing the most important faculties within the brain. Interior sight and interior audio faculties. They have not lost their capacity to transmit information and imagery over long distances, between their communities, within Earth and their communication with the star systems.

Dr. Konstantin Korotkov team from Russia have been conducting research into telepathy over long distances very successfully. Dr. Konstantin Korotkov has designed the GDV Camera for electro-photonics analysis that defines the quality of sentience or heart wave harmonics within the body, water, soil biology.

Matsura Emoto has taken imagery of perfect symmetrical crystalline, sacred geometry images within water that is holding the right heart wave harmonics. Dr. Korotkov has collected water from the purest streams in Venezuela, water that is filled with the perfect memory imprints of information from within the forests, the multiple light waves that the forest emits. The songs from inner Earth and the Cosmos. The water had a recording of 40,000 X the life force of usual town water.

Russian scientists have extensive research into the psycho physical telepathic functioning within the brain. There has been studies done with the conveyance of language, the coherent understanding of language with the whales and the dolphins. These cetaceans are advanced sentient beings, tutors for the human population. We feel happy when we are in connection with them as we are empathizing and absorbing their own harmonics waves. It becomes a reciprocal event of shared light waves. Unipolar intelligence, not separated from the communication the songs and language within the sea, Earth and the Universe. Water expands the songs within the ley lines that travel beneath the sea by 3 X.

We can look at the interaction of the Sun and observe how the galactic waves that arrive from the Solar flares are deliberately repositioning Earth back into the right orbit. The indigenous people from around the North Pole have always hummed the Aura Borealis into their bodies. They drum them in. They have understood how these lights increase their heart energy and elevate the strength of the auric field. These lights also clean the Auric field surrounding Earth and imbue heart wave coherence into the atmosphere. We are not alone. We are within a Sentient Conscious Universe and there is another quality of light and sentience within these transmissions from the Sun.

In all observation and experience it is the expansion of the time fields within us. If you are within a stressed or unconscious radio width band you are only going to hear so much. The stress impacts on timing within the brain. Stress within the brain and body will mean interior hearing and interior sight is restricted. Despondency will often prevail or lethargy.

In yoga of the mind practices you enter into the total parabola of your own sacred geometry, engaging the full circumference of left and right hemisphere light conveyance. The interior audio/inner sight capacities are activated. You are able to engage empathetic relationship with Earth or with another human being who is into the same training. You can telepathically converse. It is a question of expanding and relaxing the interior anatomy of the brain and body so it is within these deep band fields of harmonics heart energy, animated energy.

Always it is essential to connect and feel Earth.

Look at the learning capacity of a child who is in a peaceful ecology and that of a child within a stressed ecology. The stressed child will have more difficulty absorbing a subject, the interior and physical vision for receptivity will be impaired at subtle and not so subtle expressions.

Frustration will be one of these outer expressions.

We are able to manage our telepathic functioning, our telegraphic skills from entering into these disciplines on the feelings of time within, embedding ourselves within this other animated field. In the evolution of the brain, the voice was developed after the limbic brain. This is beautifully described in the book, *The Amazing Brain* by Drs. Robert Ornstein and Richard T. Thompson. The skills of telepathy were compromised when this experience of voice dialogue was chosen. Telepathy is a very fast medium of communication image/audio exchange. Gifted children will be accessing these faculties. They are known as visual spatial learners.

They will collect information easily with an image and will find it boring to read a long dissertation when the image provides complete information. It is much speedier. In different places around the world now they are catering for children who are psychic and visual. They are highly creative, fast learners and their memory recall is excellent. Accelerated learning techniques also embrace meditation and providing visualization skills and techniques. Children and adults have the capacity to resource these faculties with the right guidance, time.

### **What is the next set of human characteristics that will facilitate our leap into Aquarius?**

Slowing down so we can regain our timing with our body, our communication with Earth. Learning original disciplines so our capacitance on self organized love is full and overflowing. Regaining essential qualities of trust and sharing. There is so much and it is not rocket science, basic formulas for heart wave coherence. Project collaboration then moves into another level.

### **How do we become more conscious?**

Disposing of unnecessary emotion such as negative passion. Negative passion will persuade the dissolution of the beautiful double Fibonacci spiral of the limbic brain and the performance, rhythm and timing of all associated endocrine glands, thought and behavior.

Positive passion moves us forward. The right intention to give back to Earth in ultimate ways All the disciplines mentioned previously. Yoga, yoga of the mind, taking ourselves to or living within pristine areas to connect with Mother Nature and engage the stillness. Empathetic relationship to the vibrational hum of Nature. Moving into this transparency means that we are motivated and we engage the most extraordinary experiences within and between these worlds of sentience, the qualities of Time within and between Earth and the Galaxies. It becomes a dynamic existence when we allow stillness to reorganize our performance values.

### **Harmonic mathematical ratios? As in...?**

Study the golden mean ratio, the ratios of the pentagram, [the dodecahedron](#).

### **"The ecology of the stars." Can you take me there, Anna?**

This is about vibrational medicine Scientist and lawyer, Dr. Fred Rubinfeld, Mike Smulkis and John Fox trained a telescope to the stars and gathered the sacred geometry, harmonics waves and created vibrational medicine for healing purposes.

We can go direct. When we tune into the night skies we again are allowing our sense of being to feel these harmonic heart wave coherent light waves from the stars. They support us as much as Inner Earth energy supports us. When we apply Sacred Geometry within our Architecture and include windows to the night skies, then the world of the night skies enter our being and we have another adventure for our eyes, our timing and internal rhythm with the Cosmos and ultimate peace and health. Or, we simply ensure nights in the bush, in a large landscape with our eyes to the night skies.

### **Do you want to marry sustainability with religion?**

No. I prefer to move to a place that is sacred and in alignment and direct correspondence with Earth and the Universe. Sacred Intention and communication. This is known as fractal energy. We give and we receive energy, heart wave harmonics.

**“Hearing capacity.” Uh?**

Yes, we have the capacity to hear the songlines and to hear the music of the Universe.

**“We now have advanced geo-physical technology to image the leylines.” Please dissect and quality your statement?**

[Rob Gourlay](#), has developed aerial geo-physical mapping for measuring the leylines. He has a great example of Braidwood in New South Wales, Australia. The leylines mapped are the songlines of the Wandandia people. Where the leylines meet is Braidwood. This used to be the 'resting ground for the Wandandia people. Today with poor urban planning and incoherent transport systems the accident rate is very high where these leylines meet. To correct this means a redesign on urban layout, transport and road systems.

**Let's go to Kansas. Outback Kansas. What do you think folks need to understand about urban planning?**

Study the maps portrayed by Michael Rice and apply them to Architecture, Landscaping, and agricultural land layouts. Design and recreate and then experience the difference in the quality of feelings that every individual can walk and play within. We are able to scientifically measure with the GDV Camera these increments in life force for the body and within our atmosphere.

The Indigenous people in Australia always say Earth is a playground and we have come to play...Let's play in the right way, reconnect to Earth's time, sacred intention for Earth. Apply these therapeutic geometries for our future towns, future cities, landscapes and agricultural systems. Everyone will sing...more.

**Anna Crozier**

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## Catherine Walker, Soul Ecologist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1558>

Thanks for this experience, Willi. You are bringing consciousness into the world to meet itself in its myriad forms.  
With love, Catherine

**“Soul Ecologist?” Nice. Please give us some examples of this -- in the world -- and in the spirit!**

Soul ecology is about connecting with the earth so as to build one’s inner capacities. One becomes more deeply tuned in with nature which invites their own authenticity to come through. The work involves holistic nature-based activities and meditative practices. A natural outcome of this work is a renewed ability to live a more purposeful, meaningful and sustainable life from the inside out. Soul ecology is a deeply intimate way for people to joyfully re-discover their heart’s purpose while connecting intimately with the natural world.

This work evolved like watercolors pouring into each other from several different vessels. It emerged out of 3 decades of my own spiritual and metaphysical practice, the holistic design science of permaculture, a 3-year Waldorf training immersion, and a half-dozen years as a career counselor and life coach, fused with my passion for tuning in to the natural world. It’s been a tremendous pleasure working with people such as Christopher Kuntzsch, Penny Livingston and all the amazing souls that together make up Daily Acts and the Transition Town movement.

You asked for examples. Confidentiality is a guiding light in this work and it is honored completely. Without a doubt, the most challenging soul healing journey has been with my daughter, who continues to be the greatest blessing I have ever had in my life. She unfailingly shows me where I need to heal, and what it truly means to love someone unconditionally.

**What is happening at Worldsanctuaries.org? How does this work compare to DailyActs.org?**

World Sanctuaries was a non-profit permaculture-inspired program for creating ecosystem-friendly gardens. The lion’s share of my time was spent on the phone and on in-person site visits explaining how permaculture practices created living connections with the earth, its simplicity and ease of practice. I embraced the program as an approach whose time had come and envisioned permaculture gardens sprouting everywhere.

As it turned out, New Zealanders comprised nearly 80% of our certification business. That was the result of the program establishing its roots in New Zealand through the Global Volunteer Network’s earth restoration project in 2005. Here in California, only a small percentage of landowners actually proceeded with certifying their properties. I never would have imagined that!

In retrospect, the biggest challenge was bringing in this new way of thinking (permaculture) and trying to get it to seed and sprout in people’s minds. Trouble was, I was trying to do it all myself. Not a good model of sustainability! Despite(or perhaps because of) all the energy that went into it, WS was moderately successful for nearly 3 years before CTI invited me back on board to, among other things, organize and lead their first sustainability program.

[DailyActs.org](http://DailyActs.org) -- led and inspired by the awesome [Trathen Heckman](#) -- incorporates permaculture into everything we do by inspiring people through plenty of hands-on workshops that inspire action and through collaborative connections with local co-inspirators and their communities. I fell in love with Daily Acts because their model — their way of operating in the world — is fabulous — the best I’ve ever seen for really getting sustainable living into the hearts and minds of our communities.

**Evolution. Hope. Survival. Disparity. Where are you at today?**

It’s all about evolution. We must move beyond survival into evolution. This means changing the way we see the world — to see it holistically – to see ourselves as creative contributors, not consumers. Hope is a natural outcome of seeing and

being in the world as co-creator of the earth's healing. Disparity is the junk that comes up as we move in the direction of co-creative evolution.

### **Zero Waste. Right! Isn't this the silliest eco-play ever!?**

It's actually how nature herself operates. Check out those amazing Kiwis; they are some of the most [forward-thinking humans on the planet](#).

### **Please share some insights into the organizational ups and downs at Transition Cotati. Key principles? What is the future look like for this group, in say 20 years?**

Transition Cotati is Northern California's first Transition Town. I first learned about the Transition movement in late 2008, and subsequently, discovered Transition Cotati through CTI colleague, Hide Enomoto, who leads Transition Japan and founded Transition Fujino after living at Findhorn in Scotland with his wife and children for several years.

I learned about Transition Cotati through a chance encounter with Elaine at a sustainability tour of Ellis Creek Water Recycling facility in Petaluma. There was an instant connection and affinity between us. We got to talking, and Elaine invited me to attend one of Transition Cotati's weekly meetings while I invited her to join me at Daily Acts' annual breakfast fundraiser. We've been connecting since then at Transition Cotati's weekly meetings.

Transition Cotati is composed of six amazing people for who sustainability is a way of life. Transition Cotati exists to bring the community of Cotati into sustainable relationship with itself so as to become more resilient, self-sufficient and ultimately lighten Cotati's ecological footprint while infusing the local economy with renewed life. Together, we comprise a wheel of forward motion for the community of Cotati, raising awareness through monthly films, events such as the [350 Garden Challenge](#) — a Sonoma County-wide initiative to put a garden on every block — herb walks, canning and gardening workshops, the introduction of time banking, and building ongoing developments with Sonoma State University's Center for Community Engagement, its student body and faculty toward creating a truly sustainable future for the Town of Cotati and everyone involved in this town's evolution.

For example, we're working on initiatives that will involve SSU students gathering information about what Cotati residents need in their community so they can get what they need locally, without driving a car 10 to 15 miles away to access those things. At that point, this information will be shared with Cotati businesses, which we hope -- along with time banking -- will really spark a shift. We're also working on ways to make solar power economically available to Cotati homes and businesses. The lovely Judith Newton is Transition Cotati's primary point of contact and she can be reached through our [website](#).

### **There are 7 principles that a Transition Town is built upon:**

- positive visioning
- helping people access good information and trusting them to make good decisions
- inclusion and openness
- enabling of sharing and networking
- building resilience
- inner and outer transition
- and subsidiary — self organizing and decision making at appropriate levels.

Twenty years from now in 2030, the town of Cotati can be a model of thriving, sustainable living for other communities to learn from and emulate.

### **[Is sustainability like a religion?](#)**

Living sustainably on the earth is an outcome of awareness of the earth's condition. Being aware isn't a religion, it's a practice, like anything else one cares about deeply. In that sense, anyone could choose to parallel living sustainably with

religious practice. If doing so served a greater awakening to our true nature and relationship to the earth, then some may find it helpful. Awareness of earth care has always been alive in me since I was a child.

**Have you done [Awakening the Dreamer](#)?**

I came very close to doing it, but from all accounts, my sense was that walking a spirit-infused path of purpose had already awakened the dreamer in me many times over. So much so that I have facilitated others through to the clarity of their own purpose and begin to take steps to make that dream come alive.

**Is permaculture just another way man has justified using up the earth's resources?**

Ha, ha, ha! That's funny! In understanding permaculture, one understands how beautifully it nourishes the earth's resources and feeds her soil and root systems so completely. Permaculture is the ultimate holistic lens from which our relationship to the earth can be seen and experienced in a thoroughly conscious way. To practice permaculture principles (there are at least 12 depending on who you talk to) is to practice closed-loop system living, which ultimately approaches a zero waste philosophy.

**Can you share poem about the metaphysical life with the us?**

**What Do You Really Want?**

Let your brain whirl and spin itself  
into blessed exhausted silence  
Let it rest like a baby  
in the open palmed hands  
of the heart held Now.

What do you really want after all?  
To win, to pick the sweetest fruit on the tree?  
Or to rest from the endless succession  
of temporal moments  
and the promises that they never keep?

What do you really want?  
To take or be taken?  
To find the great pearl of liberation  
or to be consumed by it?

This is by [Adyashanti](#).

[LinkedIn Profile](#)

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## **Gunter Pauli, Author / Activist**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1563>

### **The Interview with Willi Paul -**

**Do you think that the BP oil spill in the US gulf now headed to fragile wildlife and economic critical zones will cause a change in attitudes of Americans on energy sources? Will it take more tragedy and injustice to make us care?**

There are two strategies: tragedy which has not succeeded in making fundamental shifts since it fades from our memories as we get accustomed to the pictures, the other one is the opportunity to make dreams come true.

If we are exposed to more of the opportunities to bring fundamental shifts in our lives, the joy we derive and service to the community in terms of health and joy it also works.

**Most people are fixed on the short-term and know little if anything about sustainability and alternative business metaphors and analogies. We are running out of time. How does your book address the "ungreen people?"**

It is not a matter of who is right and who is wrong, who is green and who is not. It is a matter of how can we do better, much better. And with millions out of a job, and a billion looking for a job, and the health of the people and the planet not really improving, we need to embrace innovations that will shift our quality of life for the better.

**Is sustainability like a new religion? Is Nature God now?**

Sustainability is the capacity to respond to the basic needs for water, food, health, shelter, energy, education and jobs for all WITH what we have.

And ALL means all life on earth, not just the human species. After all we depend on a whole ecosystem to produce the water, air, top soil, food that we need to live a healthy and happy life.

That is not a religion, everyone with their own religion or agnostic approach to life can embrace that this is what we need to do.

**How can mythology and alchemy work with your nature-based business processes?**

There is a lot of wisdom that is to be rediscovered. I am inspired by natural systems and in the past culture translated this into mythology. How does the water get into the coconut? There are some formidable forces that permit all that makes the apple overcome the law of gravity. And then there is alchemy. We have solely relied on covalently bound chemistry, that are molecules that are never (or very hard) to be taken apart.

Thus this leads to plastic islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is about time we look at a new chemistry that makes it possible to zip-unzip molecules and alchemy (modern day inorganic chemistry) can certainly provide us a pathway. Alchemy represents the philosophy and the wisdom of using unique properties of molecules to the benefit of all. It is part of the principle of the Blue Economy "use what you have".

**Do we have the education, moxie and visioning skills to be life guards and inventors?**

We used to have it! The greatest learning tool for millennia were the stories and the fables we told our children. Now we offer them video games, MP3 Players and a connection to the internet. But is this taking us to a better and happier future? While I do never want to forbid anything, we need to just check if these tools take us to sustainability. Perhaps the greatest missing link is that we are not exposing our children to the wonders of nature, permitting them to rediscover what we know AND improve on this. If we only teach our children what we know, then they can only do as bad as we do. Time to create a space for creativity and innovation to be tested and tried so that we can come up with some breakthroughs. This is "evolution", and that is what ecosystems have been submitted to for millions of years.

## **I say we are consumers, followers, couch potatoes. How will you get people to buy and read your complex book?**

Those who start reading - read on. Those who peak insight, want more. We are AND consumers and PASSIONATE about something, and the key is that the book offers entry points from many angles. Are you a hockey fan, you find a new business model, do you have heart trouble, you find a new business model, are you keen on micro-electronics, you also find innovations, or do you simply wish to get healthy again - you will be surprised. So the contribution is to demonstrate - as The Blue Economy does - that everyone can get creative, innovative and do something, from whatever angle you come. This is the reality of life - diverse and complex, mysterious and surprising.

## **Bio-diversity is shrinking; species are lost each day. Can you invent / create new bio-diversity from cells, sun rays and good intentions?**

No that mix does not work. But what we can do is understand the core conditions in which biodiversity thrives. Take the case of Las Gaviotas. Paolo Lugari and his team I have had the privilege of knowing since 1984 had the desire to bring drinking water to the people, understood the challenges of deforested land due to extensive cattle farming, tested and tried different approaches and converged around the regeneration of the rain forest, based on the core principles of physics and the soil: the need to have a temperature difference between top soil and rain that permits the water and the organic debris to enrich the land and then the symbiosis of the pine tree and the mycorrhizal fungus could take root.

As the study by the Colombian Academy of Sciences demonstrates, in 1984 there were 17 plant species, 11 non-native, now there are 256 species of which 90% are from the Amazon rain forest (to be correct it is the Orinoco Basin). So yes it is possible to regenerate biodiversity, it only has to become part of our intentions. And we have to realize that simply protecting biodiversity and cell research is not going to get where our intentions are : undo the damage done by humans and create a framework that unleashes the natural systems to evolve.

## **What is the single greatest road block in teaching children innovation?**

The education we give them today.

Rogue learning, studying by heart, multiple choice ... and no exposure to the real world. How can we use the forces that make the ingredients of an apple move up against the law of gravity? Kids love to know how to go against the current! Well that is what the trout does, and the butterfly is a smart windsurfer. We need to expose children instead of imposing the existing knowledge. We need to keep that imaginative and creative being alive, like Alice in Wonderland, with the only difference, Alice does not have to be disappointed that it was only a dream. This modern day journey through life and space is fun when you can let your imagination let go.

## **How does your definition of localization differ from others? And isn't the opportunity to survive the next 25 years largely bio-geographical-based?**

All definitions are good, because it is not more than a tool to describe the framework within which we wish to operate.

## **Are we headed back to village life, to hunt and peck and manufacture our cures?**

Absolutely not. Natural systems never regress to a previous state, we all evolve. However, we definitely will need to rely more on our common wisdom, shared intelligence and some will be breakthroughs imagined for life in city, some will be breakthroughs for securing a future for rural life. Take the case of the splitbox which works like our body does when dealing with the intake of air and water. Air goes to the lungs, water goes to the stomach. A simple valve system takes care of that. If we apply the same logic to a building we can see - that means go and see at the homes where this has been implemented - how we can disconnect from the septic tank, the sewage system and the municipal water treatment plants. That is pragmatic and concrete. And rural areas can learn how the dew can be harvested using a vortex - no need for any filters.

**We are programmed to think about, shop, consume and trash commodities; linear thinking. How do we get out of this madness?**

Making it so enjoyable that we realize when we buy coffee from Zimbabwe that is grown on farms where the women convert the husks and the shells into mushrooms, empowering women to generate jobs and food security, and this permits to eliminate the abuse and helps put a stop to the sex trade and AIDS. We need to understand that our purchasing power can do a lot of good - on the condition the business models are designed to generate multiple benefits - just like natural systems do. In nature, nothing only serves ONE purpose. We may only SEE one, but there are multiple benefits which in business terms could be understood as multiple cash flows - We are shifting from the triple bottom line to the quadruple cash flows. That is powerful.

**Bio-mimicry was a small scale eco-fad some years ago. How can you sell this another time around to a public that eats and disposes of nature daily?**

We started our thought process around innovations from nature tech as it is called in Japan, and bio-mimetics as it is called in the UK where it all started in the 1950s at the university of Reading, or bionics as the Germans like to refer to it. Janine Benyus and her team was hired to provide the original input. However, we do not need "another good idea" we are in need of business models that respond to the basic needs and having an insight in the chemical recipe or the biological process is not yet a business model. So instead of talking about the vortex that takes air out and puts air into water, let us see how the elimination of air permits the production of clear ice with 25% less energy, and have the devices installed through advertising agencies so that we can see the ads underneath the ice all hockey game, generating more exposure to the logos, increasing the value of the media channel, and leading to energy savings systems installed and paid for by the advertiser.

We need to change to shift from our desire to learn from nature, to our capacity to create a business model that responds to the basic needs with what we have, generating multiple benefits for all, putting us on a path of evolution from scarcity to abundance by introducing more diversity.

**Do you see any examples in evolution today that would suggest that man-made technology is fusing with natural genetic systems to produce a new type of organism?**

I would not know where to look for something like that.

**What are the most important ethical principles in The Blue Economy?**

Use what you have!

**I would argue that it's not "abundance" or "scarcity," but "survival and fear" that are driving us. Your thoughts?**

Of course for some survival and fear drives some people, and rightly so. I would get scared if I were to immerse myself into the statistics about diabetics, cancer, heart diseases, and the dispersal heavy metals in our living space. On the other hand, if we see how even in the Namibia Desert lichens thrive into the broadest biodiversity ever then we realize that we can create our space that permits diversity and abundance to emerge, provided we believe we can!

And yes we can - haven't we heard that somewhere recently?

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## **Kristina Hahn, Transcontinental / Green Architect**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1565>

### **“Skylights and Rough Sawn Wood” - The PlanetShifter.com Interview with Transcontinental / Green Architect Kristina Hahn**

Congratulations, I just saw the interview with [Ed Begley, Jr.](#) on the planetshifter web page! What a coincidence; Ed called me a few weeks ago when he was looking for a “green” architect for his residential project... Kristina

Kristina Hahn established her atelier in Los Angeles in 2008 after relocating to the West Coast from a successful career in Darmstadt, Germany. Her background includes over ten years of experience in a wide range of high profile design projects on four continents, most notably in educational facilities, creative workplace design, residential and office development projects, which have consistently won national and international design awards.

Responsible for directing all design work, Kristina initiates and develops conceptual design strategy in close collaboration with the client team. Kristina is a LEED accredited professional with specialty HOMES, a licensed architect in Europe as well as in California.

### **Current Project**

#### **How can permaculture be integrated into the wider green movement consciousness?**

Permaculture combines urban and rural planning methods to develop self-sufficient communities by learning from processes in nature. Both, the word permaculture as well as the original term permanent agriculture have their roots in the word culture which alludes to the progress of human cultivation. The shift from agriculture to bio-tech is a figurative example how our global society has moved from a cultivated self-image to a high-tech dependent identity. The synthesis of these seemingly opposing ideologies is to adopt permaculture in our lifestyle. We need to teach our children about nature just like we teach them how to read, write and calculate. Permaculture has to become a subject just like in math, languages or business.

#### **Let's say that permaculture is alchemy re-tooled. What traditional architectural practices have you transformed?**

Traditionally we designed and built buildings to protect humans from the elements. We have become so good at it, that we eclipsed nature from our consciousness. A building can now be planned and implemented anywhere around the globe ignoring its genius loci. High performing building envelopes combined with mechanical and electrical systems guarantee a conditioned interior climate independent from external natural conditions. Artificial lighting, air-conditioning and global transportation allow us to disconnect from time of day, seasons, geographic and socio-cultural locality. The only component in this equation which did not develop further is the human body. We are not made to live in sterile environments providing constant temperature, light and humidity. We are living beings not only connected but dependent on the natural environment of planet Earth. Successful architects and planners know how to implement design strategies that are in accord with the genius loci, the spirit of place.

#### **Sustainability is key to your design mantra, but is it a new religion?**

The human race is the only one on planet Earth which is destroying its habitat through its unsustainable lifestyle. Today in a world where the human-made destruction becomes visible we are reminded of the famous Cree Indian prophecy: "Only after the last tree has been cut down, Only after the last river has been poisoned, Only after the last fish has been caught, Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten."

To call this growing awareness a new religion is dangerous. Sustainability has grown into this neo-protestant idea that "it has to hurt in order to be good." For example you are not supposed to drive your car more than necessary; you should not take the airplane when going on vacation; you should not eat imported foods and so on because it is bad for the

environment. Slowly you get the idea that a sustainable life is less worth living. Designing architecture for a sustainable lifestyle is not our goal but a minimum prerequisite to create good architecture. Historically architecture existed to the expense of nature. We aim to design human settlements that contribute to the quality of life.

### **What metaphors run through your mind when you first consider the shape and community of a building?**

It is impossible to generally define the metaphors of any design process, especially the very first creative thoughts that form the beginning of a continuous thread throughout the project, because every project is different. A lot of research goes into finding out about the location of the project, the requirements of the program and the culture of the client. The first thing we do when designing is to picture ourselves being the user. How would we like to work, live, relax? Can we put ourselves in the shoes of our client? A lot of questions need to be asked such as: What is working with the current situation? What needs to be improved? What might change in the future? The most challenging thing is to anticipate the unknown and to plan for it.

### **As a designer, what are the limitations in the USGBC LEED prescriptions?**

To award sustainable buildings with the LEED certification is a great start to bring awareness to the general public. The building industry is the main contributor to global extraction of resources, expanding landfills and polluting the environment. No real alternative to the LEED certification process is globally available.

From an architectural point of view LEED is limited in many regards. Because the grade of certification is based on a number of provisions, the certification is point based and not performance based. In the future we would like to see an expiration date associated with the label. In case a building user or owner modifies the building the label can be revoked. One important aspect to remember is that LEED is in no regards a guarantor for design quality. LEED is not a certification for good architecture.

### **Are you involved in the AIA's 2030 Challenge?**

Architecture 2030 is a non-profit organization established by an architect to fight global-warming. The AIA endorsed the Challenge but that does not mean all AIA members are participating in the 2030 challenge. Coming from Germany where the building technology is in regards to quality and sustainability far more advanced than in the United States the buildings we design in our studio easily meet and most often exceed the requirements of the 2030 challenge which looks at the fossil fuel, GHG-emitting, energy consumption performance and aims for Carbon-neutral buildings, developments and major renovations by 2030.

### **When you consider the environmental impacts caused by organizations from their existing operations on a campus- or corporate-wide scale, what are the key metrics?**

#### **A lot can be learned from researching the following five key metrics:**

- design quality: site, orientation, neighborhood, transportation and logistics, life-cycle considerations, flexibility, longevity, etc.
- building materials: sustainable and healthy products, recycling, fair trade, material efficient construction, waste management
- energy performance: insulation, mechanical systems, lighting, appliances, etc.
- water efficiency: rainwater harvesting systems, greywater reuse system, landscaping, greenroof, parking surfaces, fixtures, etc.
- healthy culture: daylighting, indoor air quality, corporate identity, workplace strategy, fair trade

### **What new earth-sourced building materials have you experimented with? Results to share?**

Aren't all building materials earth-sourced? Where else would they come from than from planet Earth? We like to tap into the library of [Transmaterial](#), a huge resource of innovative materials always on the look-out for new cutting-edge developments.

Kristina Hahn Atelier is a big advocate of textiles in architecture because of their variety in applications. Textiles can be used for tensile structures, suspended ceilings, space defining curtains, carpets, mobile meeting rooms, exterior tent structures, shading devices, façade elements, railings, bridges, net floors to name just a few. Suddenly the expression "architecture is the clothing of space" has a whole new meaning.

**Even with something as simple as composting, building owners can have problems changing staff behavior. What are the dominant values and principles in your green processes?**

Usually when populations move into a new building it is a signal of a change in company/organization/family culture as well. When the physical environment is improved, building users usually adopt their habits quite fast to the new requirements. Environmentally conscious architecture always involves not only the education of the building users, but especially of the building management as well. Awareness of what kind of cleaning supply should be used to maintain the quality of the spaces for example is a small but important component of educating the client. When the user is provided with the choice to adopt living or working spaces to their needs, this freedom and flexibility is appreciated and supports the new dominant culture.

**How important is sunlight to human interaction?**

Sunlight can be harmful to the human body. Looking directly into the sun can lead to blindness. Skin exposure can lead to sunburn and skin cancer. However, without sunlight there would be no life on planet Earth. This means that we depend on the sun more than we are willing to admit.

People with a lack of sunlight get depressed, with symptoms like sadness, fatigue and hopelessness. Humans are still quite natural organisms that depend on natural cycles. Even inside buildings it is sunlight that keeps us healthy. The ultraviolet light emitted by the sun has a cleansing mechanism and helps to disinfect building interiors. It breaks down the contaminants that pollute the indoor air. And what provides us with more energy than we need for all human interaction? The sun provides Earth with as much energy every hour as human civilization uses every year. This is why the sun, 92.900.000 miles away from the Earth, is our favorite nuclear reactor of all times.

Sunlight is vital because it is the primary source of our good mood, our health and our energy.

**Is it hard to design a green roof to function as both an integrated building component and a patio?**

A building needs to be designed to accommodate the additional load of a green roof or pedestrians. To design a green roof or a roof patio as an integrated building component is easier and more cost effective for new construction; for retrofit projects the cost can be prohibitive.

There are two options the green roof is supposed to be used as a patio. When the green roof consists of a substrate depth between 0.8 and 6 inches it is most frequently planted with a mixture of sedums. Maintenance is generally minimal but the vegetation is not meant to be walked on. In this case the patio area should be separated from the green space which can be done with water permeable paving material that provides an adequate ground surface for outdoor furniture.

Green roofs with a substrate that is at least 6 inches deep allow you to grow a greater variety and larger-sized plants. These roofs need to be maintained and can be used like a garden. In this case weight-load considerations are a greater concern.

**Kristina Hahn | AIA | LEED AP+**

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"It is a desperate shame to see oil interests interfering in this obvious statewide and national interest. This to me is where government must intervene in the greater interests of the state and the country." AB

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### **What actions by PG&E regarding the [Marin Energy Authority \(MEA\)](#) application are costing them credibility?**

To answer this I think we need to separate prop 16 from Marin as community choice aggregation. I have not been following prop 16 closely, and although I hear that there is resistance, I speak mostly to people against PG&E. It is a common mistake to think that everyone thinks like yourself.

A recent survey of PG&E in Marin County would suggest that most people know PG&E as the company that provide callout services and delivers electricity. For this they have a high satisfaction rating.

PG&E strategy has been to leverage fear of change, and the lack of information on the separation of energy generation and energy distribution for the average consumer. As consumers find that the actual issue is about energy generation, which will remain reliably delivered by PG&E I think there will be a backlash against their deception and monopolistic practices. People fear change, they fear financial risk, but they also fear a large corporations which is not being honest.

PG&E have not been honest in their marketing against MEA. If PG&E loses prop 16, the combination of attempting to manipulate the legislation, and the unseemly marketing practices in Marin will harm their brand.

### **What was your role in developing [Marin Clean Energy](#)?**

I had no part in the process at all. In fact I'm ashamed to say that my first introduction to MEA was when I misunderstood both the law and its ability to facilitate local energy generation.

My relationship with them began when I realized I has made an error and called to retract what I had written. This saga remains published on my web site.

However, I believe I have brought a strong economic perspective to the generation of local energy and its delivery as an economically sustainable and sound solution to the County. I understand the environmental implications of carbon emissions, but I do not subscribe to the idea that solving this problem must cost money. In fact I strongly believe that the only way to solve our environmental problem is to find economically sound solutions that are good for business, and that they will adopt.

### **What's up with the Grand Jury report?**

The grand jury report was based on the business plan of April 2008. It was prepared as a document to persuade the cities of the County to enter into a joint powers agreement, and commence the process to develop a community choice aggregation plan. As a document produced on the various and wide ranging the speculative nature of the business plan, it was most selective in finding the more negative to criticize, but was reasonable.

It is a pity that the criticism followed so closely the talking points from PG&E. But, assuming that the role was to critique, it did a fair job.

However, in December 2009, the business plan had been superseded by the implementation plan, the one approved by the CPUC. Speculation about local energy generation, was now replaced with actual data of how energy would be procured, and the ratepayers of Marin adopted into the CCA according to the legislation of AB117.

It is hard to understand why the grand jury would base their critique on a document 18 months out of date, when they were in possession of an actual implementation plan. Many of the criticisms raised were not applicable to the plan. And they were a number of criticisms you would expect doing a basic financial analysis of the plan.

I have heard it suggested that the lack of focus on the implementation plan was persuaded by PG&E interfering in local politics. I think it is likely that it was nearing Christmas, a lot of work had been done on the earlier document, and it was assumed that the implementation plan would follow the business plan. The grand jury on not energy experts, and in some ways it was an unfair task to ask them to review this highly technical topic. I have little doubt that PG&E were not unhappy about the process and the interpretation followed.

What ensued was plain diabolical in my opinion. The County Treas. Michael Smith, went public with an opinion which he has both admitted, and retracted, but which is clearly a repetition of the grand jury's findings. As an accountant in an earlier life, I believe it's fair to say that it is impossible for his opinion to have been based on the then current implementation plan. PG&E were quick to jump on the opportunity to base their marketing in the County on the cumulative financial doubts being raised by the grand jury and now the treasurer.

But this process took a decidedly unpleasant turn when a short while later 11 passed Mayors wrote a letter to the Mill Valley city Council, essentially restating the grand jury report and Michael Smith's comments. Etiquette suggests that passed mayors do not comment on the incumbent Council's decisions. But despite this the letter was drafted by an inside threesome (so rumor has it) and eight people signed on to trusted peers.

It's hard to know exactly what motivated this particular activity. But PG&E thought Christmas had arrived early. The playbook strategy, which some suggest was the basis of this letter being constructed in the first place, states that one establishes a trusted source to discredit to the plan, known local people to confirm the statements made, and to build on this by people in the community. PG&E's mailings used these three activities as a basis of building a watertight case in the community of financial fear and financial risk.

Few people in the county understand the details of the electric bill, most have heard one off the comments regarding financial risk from one of these trusted sources.

### **What is planned for the May 7th "power transfer" party?**

It is a long time since a local government agency had a resounding success in the community. The Marin energy Authority on May 7 is the result of legislation passed in September 2002 to bring competition in energy generation to the state the California.

Competition brings innovation, and I think it's fair to say that the existence of this local agency has already been off significant benefits to many of PG&E's customers. They certainly have heard more from the account reps in the last few weeks and possibly in the last few years.

Three months of mail carpet bombing throughout the county, with statements by the grand jury treasure and respected individuals have taken a toll. The opt out rates is nearly 25%, which is as high as five times what might be expected in normal times.

The local authority does not have the money or the wherewithal to run television ads in the County, or to run an equally sized marketing communications plan. It is estimated that PG&E spent over \$7 million dollars in Marin. This is nearly 3 times the total costs of establishing the local authority.

On May 7, over 200 businesses across Marin will announce their support for local energy generation, independence from fossil fuels, price stability, clean power, meeting the California environmental goals, and the value of competition in a market. Businesses range in size from the largest consumer of electricity in the County, MMWD, to the smallest one-man practitioner, across almost every industry segment. This is ultimately the only way for a community to tell the community that this is a good thing.

Community choice means exactly that. What better way than for the community to speak out on the first day of the first energy supply of the first community choice aggregator in history of California.

And for some of these businesses it has not been easy. There is an understanding that emotions are running high. Politicians have made statements aligning the local agency with green fiscal responsibility in a down economy. Others have talked about risk. I applaud each of the businesses that has been willing to get off the fence and to make a statement as to why the community must rally together and support the community's decisions.

### **So, please clarify what happens with PG&E's power supply and services on 5/7/10?**

On May 7 the electricity consumed by phase 1 customers in Marin county will be matched to electricity supplied to PG&E from Shell energy North America. This energy will be 78% of greenhouse gas free, and a minimum of 25% renewable. This compares to some 14% renewable from PG&E. But this is only the first step. The wholesale energy discounts available for the supply of electricity to these consumers, will be retained by the local agency rather than retained by PG&E and its corporate profits. As a nonprofit local agency, the surplus may only be used for energy efficiency and the local energy generation programs.

These are difficult times, and it takes money to invest in local energy generation. This may be one of the first times that a local agency has raised money without taxing its residents in some manner. There are some who questioned this redistribution of corporate wealth. But this is why competition is good, ratepayers have choice, and for the first time will have a say over what happens to the energy surpluses available on the generation side of the electricity question.

### **Are rates going up per the "old" PG&E rat schedule?**

This is a board decision for MEA, which will be taken in the public forum including public debate by the board of MEA . However, unlike PG&E who have a number of rate increases applied for with the CPUC, the local authority has a five year contract with Shell energy North America.

The board at its discretion may choose to increase prices in line with PG&E, which will result in ongoing surpluses being retained in the county for ongoing investments. Alternatively it might choose to hold prices and pass the surpluses to the ratepayers.

The good news is that the board has no purpose to exist other than to serve the eight cities that comprise its membership. It is reasonable to assume that it will make this decision in the community's best interests.

### **Do you foresee rates coming down?**

I think anticipating energy rates coming down in United States where the rates are already so low is unlikely. But if we are to avoid ongoing rate increases driven by a global market for fossil fuels is critical that counties and states free themselves from fossil fuel indexed electricity. Distributed local generation is the only way to do that. Right now the cost of solar energy, wind, fuel cell match that of central energy generation and distribution. But this is only the case because the distribution charges are eliminated.

In order for local renewable energy to be generated, and distributed within the community's boundaries the cost of generating local energy must continue to come down. The good news is that technology will improve following Moore's Law each year. We are at the inflection point right now where the cost of a marginal kilowatt hour of electricity off the subsidies is similar to the cost of a centrally generated kilowatt hour. A local authority that is in business to encourage local generation and distribution is critical to unleash the imagination and potential of the emerging renewable generation technologies. At the same time local demand will go up as electric vehicles substitute fossil fuel energy for electric energy.

I believe that we will see a progressive downward pressure on generation prices as we transfer the source of electricity to renewables, and apply innovative technologies to efficiently convert them into electrons we can use.

## **What has MEA learned from the first two community power entities?**

Unfortunately both of MEA's predecessors operated in an environment of elaboration and not hostile competition. Many of the challenges faced in California have been unique, and I think it is more likely that MEA will act as the front-runner to other California states in providing examples and guidance to them.

One of the lessons I have learned is how few regular residents actually understand the nature of energy generation and how they are charged for it. This creates a rich ground for sowing fear and false marketing by the incumbent. I think future CCA's will do well to invest in educating their communities about electricity supply in general.

I'm also surprised at how few people have seriously changed the behavior when it comes to consuming electricity. We may seek to be energy conscientious, but there is a mindset shift to put that into action.

I would encourage any authority exploring this process to make sure they understand the impact of change on the community they serve. In some ways Marin is a mixture, we are close to Silicon Valley where change is embraced daily. At the same time there is considerable retired old money, where change is resisted. I think that the culture to change will significantly impact both the adoption of clean energy by the residents, and the willingness to embrace the efficiency changes and local generation changes required. In many cases this may acquire the city Council to invest monies in energy generation projects, which is not something they can look to past councils for guidance on.

MEA is not alone in making the cultural and behavioral changes that are required for the consumption of electricity if savings are to be made on both the generation side, and on the efficiency of the consumption side. PG&E are taking some unfair criticism for the implementation of smart meters and the resultant increase in electricity bills. Smart meters are simply an enabling technology that allows consumers to be presented with a menu of what things cost at what time. We are all familiar with playing different prices for different wines we drink. But we are not familiar with playing different prices for the amount of electricity we use at different times of the day. Ultimately we do need to become responsible for the costs of what we consume. Smart meters provide the mechanisms by which we can be informed of what we are doing. Once we are informed, our costs will go up if we continue to behave in the same way as before.

It is not fair to blame the meter, which did nothing more than measure what you consumed, when you consumed it, and send that information to whomever was billing you that you might be billed on the new basis of charging. If it is a gripe on smart metering, it should not be aimed at the meters, but rather at the rate schedules and how they are applied as consumer behavior is changed.

## **What advice will give other communities who want to take control of the utility grid?**

I do not think it is a good idea for a community to take control of the utility grid. Operating grid requires economies of scale, technical people, management, and service levels that are not the remote of a local government agency.

I think the most exciting part of community choice aggregation is the partnership between the owners of the grid, the local authority who are empowered to make decisions in the interest of the community, and creative innovation in the capital markets that brings new energy generation solutions reliably delivered to the table.

## **Is community power production a revolution?**

Yes I believe it is. The incumbent utilities can be likened to the old mainframe computer suppliers. At one level they wish to retain the status quo. In fairness to them they are concerned that emerging unproven technologies might put the reliable supply of electricity at risk .

Electricity is a critical resource and lives are lost if it goes wrong.

The revolution is similar in its nature to that the computer industry went through as we moved from mainframe computers with IBM and proprietary communications protocols , to a Google like infrastructure of independent wirelessly connected computing .

But the stakes are many times higher. If we fail the economy of the United States will be severely prejudiced as energy costs skyrocket. If it is too aggressive with could face an unreliable grid.

The hope is for the next wave of technological innovation that could alter the dynamics of the US energy economy. To have a low cost reliable infinite supply of electricity is critical to an energy-based economy like what we have here in California.

It is no wonder to me that those who supply fossil fuels will go to extraordinary lengths to ensure California's continued addiction to energy, but an energy required by the conversion of fossil fuels.

“Marin Clean Energy (MCE) is a renewable energy alternative to PG&E's electric supply that will soon be available to Marin customers. MCE is responsible for sourcing the power and purchases the energy supply while PG&E continues to deliver the energy, maintain and repair transmission lines, and provide customer service and billing.”

### **How do you see the future relationship between PG&E and MEA working?**

It will be testy at first, but in the long-term change will be embraced. PG&E may have stooped to some unpleasant tactics to retain control of the market. But once it is clear that they distributed energy generation model is in place, they will want to participate in the moving of electricity from place to place, and will want to participate in the investments and opportunities that making it locally will afford them.

The computer industry has many examples of co-petition, where partners and competitors work together to find the best solutions for the customers.

I do not believe in excessive government, but neither do I believe in an entirely free market economy when it comes to a resource like electricity. It is not possible for it to be competition in the distribution site. The duplication of infrastructure is just not feasible. This is one of those clear cases where regulation, innovation, and corporation must get together and work it out.

The stakes are too high for ideological positions to provide. Over the next 30 years California must become energy independent of fossil fuels if it is to name a viable energy-based economy.

It is a desperate shame to see oil interests interfering in this obvious statewide and national interest. This to me is where government must intervene in the greater interests of the state and the country.

### **What is the Light vs. Deep Green Product from Marin Clean Energy?**

Light Green is the regular product at the same price as PG&E. The energy mix is 78% carbon free and a minimum of 25% renewable,

The deep Green product, which for phase 1 customers costs and additional cent per kilowatt hour, is 100% renewable.

For so-called early adopters, there is an early deep Green product, the cost is one cents per kilowatt hour plus an additional \$10 per month to pay for the administration charges of early adoption. As early adoption fee will fall away when the rate payers normal adoption time arrives.

### **How can we get folks to reduce their energy consumption?**

This is a cultural and behavioral issue. I wrote on it [here!](#)

I believe we need to educate our society to be more responsible for what they waste. It is politically correct to say save energy. But I believe we need to stop wasting.

Using energy is good, the issue is using what we need and no more! We need to engender a sense of loss when we waste a natural resource, like losing a small part of ourselves. It is not about the money, it is about us wasting and yet caring so little. This lack of caring is subtle, and as we do it creeps into everything we do. Energy is with us all the time.

I see it as my conscience, a constant reminder to be thinking of who made it, and what right I have to consume it.

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**Rianne C. ten Veen, Islam & Environment Specialist**  
**Faith & Climate Change Project / Birmingham Friends of the Earth**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1576>

"Muslims are recommended or even obliged to vote for the party who will be of most benefit on a national and international level, who will increase upon that which is good, or at the least, lessen the extent of the current evil prevalent in the world today. At the same time, the Muslims should exert the utmost effort to oppose those whose policies are against the welfare of humanity.

A true Muslim is the one who does not defame or abuse others; but the truly righteous becomes a refuge for humankind, their lives and their properties. - Hadith (saying) of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as narrated by Abd'Allah bin Amr." R.V.

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**Tell us about what you call a "sensory and sustainable heritage border."**

Here the Faith & Climate Change Project are working with one of the city's parks to develop quiet spaces where people can be encouraged to take time and reflect in the park. It is an ongoing piece of work where we are incorporating the ideas of a peace and sensory garden into many of the parks' borders.

**What role does Friends of the Earth have in your work?**

In the Faith & Climate Change Project, Friends of the Earth supported us in the beginning and nurtured the idea and concept. We are now (including after several external recognitions, incl. The Guardian [UK national newspaper] Community Hero Award and reaching the final of NESTA's Big Green Challenge) rooted within [Birmingham Friends of the Earth](#) which is its own independent organization and very supportive.

**Is sustainability like a religion?**

Tough question... sometimes people of faith think that environmentalists are trying to convince them to join a 'new religion' (that of tree huggers?), while I personally believe that all religions have inbuilt commands and encouragements to live sustainably so in that sense that sustainability is part of all religions.

**How do you define creation?**

I personally define Creation as in the Quran, e.g. "Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth." (Quran chapter 40, verse 57) where we are asked to "walk on the Earth in humility" (Quran chapter 25, verse 63) and more specifically "He it is Who has placed you as viceroys/ guardians of the earth and has exalted some of you in rank above others [some are rich/ poor; some are strong/ weak etc so each accountable to his/ her ability], that He may try you in the gifts He has given you.

Your Lord is swift to requite (evil), and He verily is Forgiving, Merciful." (Quran chapter 6, verse 165). I believe other faiths have very similar ideas (even if not all non-Abrahamic faiths share idea of a Creator God), so caring for the environment is a positive opportunity not just to express our faith, but also for interfaith/ community cooperation. Note that in the Faith & Climate Change project we don't define creation, we work with those all faith communities inspired by a love for our planet to make it a cleaner, greener place to live in.

**Are all faiths welcome?**

We welcome people of faith of all faiths and denominations within any faith who want to work together to care for our world, those who want to communicate, share and learn from other faiths as we face the environmental challenges of our time collectively.

**What are the environmental challenges in your region?**

Similar to those in many big cities, especially in the Western world, though ultimately similar to any region. I would say our biggest challenges are people and resources: waking them up to the realities of climate change and then finding the resources to assist them make the necessary changes.

**Rianne C. ten Veen**

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## Daniel Lerch, Post Carbon Institute

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1596>

"Victorville's residents are utterly dependent on private cars to get to work—or anywhere else. The town has no public transit of any kind and, statistically, zero percent of people in town walk or ride bikes to get to work. Lacking other options, private cars are economic necessities in Victorville, as they are for millions of people living in similar exurban boomtowns across much of the United States. During 2007, almost a quarter of the people in Victorville spent over two hours driving to and from work each day, and 10% spent more than three brutal hours in their daily work commute. These super-commuters were largely heading to and from the massive Los Angeles region, located over a small mountain range to the south. At least partially because of traffic jams on the 80-mile route into greater Los Angeles, 15% of people in Victorville in 2007 left on their morning commutes before 5 a.m."

From: [The Post Carbon Reader](#) -- a valuable resource for policymakers, college classrooms, and concerned citizens.

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### **What is uncertain in our pollution-packed industrial economy? We burn fossil fuels and emit carbon. The Earth dies, Right?**

The Earth is going to continue along just fine even if we manage to set off catastrophic climate change. It's been through massive climate upheavals before and it will again. What matters to us is whether we continue to the same kind of biosphere in which we were able to evolve into Homo sapiens, develop culture and civilization, and built the modern world as we know it. And that, really, is the ultimate uncertainty we're flirting with in our fossil-fuel-dependent global economy of nearly seven billion people: we're consuming and wasting so much, so fast, that we really are threatening the ecological basis of our modern existence.

### **The [Post Carbon Institute](#) home page uses the "addicted" in the stark choice between staying the course and choosing alternative fuels. What do you mean by addicted? Who is the pusher? Who is the addict?**

The easy answer is "we consumers and our economies are the ones addicted to fossil fuels, and it's the big energy companies and their cronies in government who are the pushers." But of course it's more complicated than that. It's really the entire modern, globalized economic system that is addicted to fossil fuels, and you could argue that anyone or any institution that contributes to that system in its current form -- whether it's building a new lane of highway or permitting a new offshore oil well-- bears some responsibility as a "pusher."

Moreover, think about what "addiction" really means. I think when a lot of people talk about our "addiction to fossil fuels" there's an implication that it's a simple choice between them and renewables, almost a Nancy Reagan-esque "just say no!" attitude. But it's not at all a simple choice. As communities, businesses, households, and individuals we have inherited a centuries-old, deep-seated addiction, and trillions of dollars worth of institutions and infrastructure all built around that addiction. It's not something we can change with a simple choice or with simple actions. And yet, we need to break that addiction, and quickly. So it is a choice, and it's very stark choice.

### **BP is careful to walk a fine line between their "one time" incident in the Gulf and their POV that the USA will need more and more fossil-base fuels moving ahead? Who should the consumer believe?**

Folks who say we will need more fossil fuels moving ahead are correct up to a point. The world's trillions of dollars worth of fossil-fuel-oriented infrastructure is not going to be converted to wind-generated electricity overnight, or in five or ten years (that was one of the big points of the famous Department of Energy "Hirsch Report" a few years ago). If we want to have what has been called an "energy descent" --as opposed to a crash or collapse-- we're probably going to have to have some amount of new fossil fuels coming online for the next few decades or so. That won't solve the current peak oil problem -- even drilling all-out right now wouldn't really solve the current peak oil problem -- but it

could mean the difference between a manageable fossil fuels decline rate and an global-economy-collapsing fossil fuels decline rate.

Now, that's not to say that we should drill all-out. We shouldn't. One of the arguments made by folks concerned about peak oil is that our money is better spent on investing in renewable energy infrastructure for the long haul instead of throwing it at increasingly-expensive, ecologically-disastrous, non-renewable energy sources like deepwater oil, tarsands oil, polar oil, mountaintop-removal coal, and unconventional natural gas

So, yes, we'll need some amount of new fossil fuels for some time to come -- but society's investment in those energy sources should be a steadily declining fraction of our investment in renewable sources and technologies.

And as far as BP saying this is a "one-time" incident: Well, I guess it's a one-time incident until it happens again, isn't it? The technology and engineering to get at these increasingly-difficult sources of oil is only going to get more complex, and more expensive.

### **Isn't the transition to a greener world best viewed as a local effort first? Do you know about [DailyActs.org](http://DailyActs.org) in Petaluma or Transitions US?**

The "Transition Town" process is an incredibly valuable model for taking effective action on these issues at the local level, and Daily Acts is a great example of how that can be done. The transition to a society and economy that runs largely on renewable energy needs to happen at all levels, from the more local to the most global. I wouldn't say that it needs to be a local effort "first," but given the political and economic realities of how our world currently works, those local efforts are probably also the most important -- because that's how the ideas are spread and the political will for built for the larger-scale policy and structural changes needed.

### **How is Obama doing on his green energy vision?**

Well, I don't know that he had much of a real "green energy vision" to begin with. He was quite clear before the election that he supports coal power and nuclear power. And frankly, I don't follow stuff at the national policy level too much. There's so much that goes on behind closed doors, and there are so many different relationships and power issues in play, that, to my mind, it's almost useless for an outsider to try to follow it on anything less than a full-time basis. I pay more attention to what's happening at the local and state levels -- both because it's usually more obvious what's happening and why, and because historically that's where the action's been on energy and climate policy.

So when things happen like the president suddenly talking about offshore drilling moratoria and reforming the Minerals Management Service, it's great and I take note. But the events that led to that happening were unpredictable, and nobody but nobody knows what other events it will really take (or not take) for the president to ultimately act on those words seriously and definitively.

### **Tell about PCI's zero waste strategies.**

Internally we try to reduce our waste as much we can, of course -- and we're a pretty small organization, so that's not too hard. We recently moved our headquarters office to a more central location and I bike to work up here in the Portland office; we're very light on our paper use, even to the point of paying vendors by electronic direct deposits as opposed to by mailed paper checks.

Our larger zero-waste philosophy is in line with our friends at the [Product Policy Institute](http://ProductPolicyInstitute.org) and their executive director (and Post Carbon Fellow) Bill Sheehan. That true zero-waste philosophy puts the focus on reducing material use overall, shifting financial responsibility for waste from the consumer and taxpayer to the product producer, and challenging infrastructure decisions like waste-to-energy and landfill-gas-capture that lock us in to waste production with relatively minor energy or climate benefits. Bill and PPI President Helen Spiegelman wrote a whole chapter that digs into these issues in our forthcoming book *The Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21st Century's Sustainability Crises* (<http://www.postcarbonreader.com>).

### **Is Clean Coal really viable greentech or an industry sham?**

"Clean coal" is not yet a significantly viable green technology, and my understanding is that it's yet not clear that it ever could be. By "significantly viable green technology" I mean that it would need to make a significant long-term reduction in greenhouse gas emissions per unit of coal burned (which is important because carbon sequestration reduces the efficiency of generating electricity from coal, so putting in these systems means that more coal needs to be burned), and do so in a way that keeps coal cost-competitive with renewable energy. The technology is still quite young, and the coal we're burning has a worse and worse net return on energy (as with oil, we got to the high-quality first, and now we're increasingly resorting to the low-quality stuff).

So again it comes to that argument by the peak oilers I mentioned earlier: Does it make sense to keep throwing our money at dying resources, or should we instead invest in resources like wind and solar that will never die out?

### **What is PCI's track record on environmental / social justice issues?**

Post Carbon's roots were in the peak oil world, back in 2003 when only a few people outside the petroleum geology field were even talking about peak oil. We brought an environmental perspective and a local-issues perspective to the conversation, and that had a much stronger social justice component to it than most mainstream environmental groups (although we didn't of it as such at the time) -- because we were talking about how the economic challenges ahead would affect local communities and vulnerable population, and how the responses to these challenges needed to come not from big business or the federal government but from local citizens.

As Post Carbon grew and as the peak oil issue became more well-known, we learned more about how disadvantaged communities were all too often left out of even local decision-making structures and processes -- and at the same time, we learned about people doing essential work on transition-related social justice issues, people like Van Jones, Majora Carter, and Will and Erika Allen (of Growing Power in Milwaukee and Chicago). So we had a lot of conversations with a lot of folks, we recruited Majora and Erika as Post Carbon Fellows, and we continue to explore how social justice issues and the deep history of social justice struggles inform our more-established work on peak oil and environmental issues.

It's fascinating, it's a constantly evolving story. I had a great conversation earlier this year with Erika Allen about Growing Power's work doing what I'd thought was basically just small-scale urban farming with disadvantaged inner-city communities. She showed me how it's not just about teaching gardening skills -- it's full-on organizing around the community taking ownership and control of its own food supply system, and all the social and economic benefits (for individuals, for households, and for the whole community) that brings. She showed me what their work means in the context of centuries of racial and class discrimination -- and also in the context of very present-day political and corporate power dynamics. Powerful stuff; we transcribed and adapted that conversation for The Post Carbon Reader as well.

**Daniel Lerch, Program Director: Communities, Government**

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## **Raven Gray, Transition US Co-founder & President**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1607>

### **What are three key transitions that Transitions US has gone through since starting up here?**

Transition US was founded in 2007. That was the first key transition: the formation of our initiating group. The second big transition was in 2008 when we received seed funding that enabled us to become a non-profit, open an office, hire staff and develop a comprehensive website. The third transition has been in process since 2009, with the formation of a solid working board and the development of several important partnerships with national organizations.

### **Are we acting through fear these days?**

People come to the Transition Movement in various states of anxiety and despair, and learn to transform their fear into action. They are turned on by our message of hope, and our method of engaged optimism. We paint an enticing picture of the future, one that draws people out of their fearful shells, out from the shade of gloom, into the sunshine of the good life. The Transition process is a joyful, positive, solutions-based approach. It empowers our communities to start planting seeds of change, and to celebrate the great transition of our times. If we had a slogan, it might be "we can do this together for fun!" While fear is ever present in our culture, we do not let fear take the driving seat. We push fear into the gutter and let hope take the road.

### **How do you teach your son to innovate?**

My son is the king of innovation. He teaches me how to innovate. If I quiet my mind, my son lets me into his world where everything and anything is possible. A wooden spoon might be a digging tool, a hat, a fire poker, a shoe remover, or a dandelion basher. He lives in a magical realm of imagination and creativity. He is intimately connected with the flow of life. He's in the stream. I'm on the shore.

### **What are some of the social and cultural impacts from the BP oil spill?**

This environmental catastrophe has been a big wake up call for many people. Questions about our oil consumption and fossil fuel dependency have trickled into the mainstream conversation. People are questioning why we are drilling so deep in a sensitive and fragile ecosystem, and whether there might be other cleaner, greener sources of energy. That these questions are being increasingly debated in our public discourse is a silver lining on an otherwise extremely black and ominous storm cloud.

While it's far too early to tell what the impacts will be from the BP oil spill, they will most certainly be far reaching. Some of them will be potentially devastating, particularly for the coastal communities of the Gulf of Mexico. One third of America's seafood is produced by these communities. The indigenous tribe of Atakap have depended on the Gulf for hundreds of years. The economies of these communities are also heavily dependent on tourism. How will these people cope with the loss of their livelihoods?

Yet, in every crisis there is opportunity. Perhaps this is the time for these people to begin to build resilience back into their communities, to create a more vibrant and fulfilling localized culture that is not dependent on a global, oil-based economy.

### **How do you compare the processes and programs at Transition US with those at [DailyActs.org](http://DailyActs.org)?**

Transition US is a national non-profit that provides support, training and networking to the grassroots, community-based Transition movement. Daily Acts is an on-the-ground non-profit, deeply rooted in the local communities of Sonoma County. They are doing transition work at the local level, and Transition US is supporting groups and organizations at the national level.

Daily Acts has been doing some great collaborative work with local governments. They have been very effective in

getting permaculture out of the backyard and into the front gardens of city officials. They are now working on creating models that Transition Communities can use to build bridges to their own local governments.

The founder and Executive Director of Daily Acts, Trathen Heckman, is on the Transition US Board, and our work is very closely aligned. He is a personal hero of mine. He is cultivating community self-reliance, through education and actions that empower and inspire people to create a more beautiful and bountiful world, and we are doing the same. We are driven by the same vision and mission. We are birds of a feather, may we always flock together.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion?**

Sustainability is an overused buzzword. In Transition we like to talk about resilience - we see this as a more useful term. I don't think sustainability or resilience have anything in common with religion. I'd be more inclined to see them instead as part of a new, unfolding mythology, cosmology, and philosophy.

### **Please define resilience on local and global levels? How to connect the two paths in our communities?**

Resilience is an ecological term that refers to the ability of a system (such as a community) to withstand shocks in the face of change from the outside. In other words, it refers to the ability of a community not to collapse when there is an interruption in oil supply, an economic downturn, or a drastic change in climate, but to be able to respond, adapt and not only survive, but thrive, no matter what comes their way.

What does a resilient community look like? It's going to look different from place to place, but there will be some common characteristics, such as a strong local economy, local food systems and local energy systems. A resilient community is self-reliant, and provides for most of its basic needs locally, but it is still open to trade with the wider world. And more than that, it is a place where the people are resilient, robust, psychologically fulfilled, diversely skilled, and able to creatively respond and adapt to change.

In the Transition movement, the focus is on the local, from the ground up. We don't demonize the global infrastructure, but we also don't try to design resilience at the global level. We believe that by focusing our efforts on building local resilience, that global resilience will naturally and spontaneously emerge.

### **Where will the planet be in 20 years? Will women play a more dominant role?**

I hold a vision in my mind's eye that the world will be transformed into a great garden of peace and productivity, where there is an abundance of wildlife, and people live in small communities of incredible creativity, where life is a celebration, and everyone's basic needs are met, unleashing vast amounts of innovation and ingenuity so that art and culture flourish around the world. There is tolerance, diversity, reverence, equity and justice, for all of life on earth.

That doesn't mean to say I am wildly naive, and full of Utopian dreams. I don't really know what 2030 will look like. I don't think any of us know what the future holds. Nevertheless, I know that the vision we hold in our minds eye when we begin the work of Transition, will go a long way to determining where we will end up.

Visioning is an integral part of the Transition process, a powerful change making tool. People need to imagine for themselves what a better future might look like. Not just cerebrally, but they need to feel their vision viscerally, with all their senses engaged. If they can taste, smell, feel, hear and see the future as a wonderful and amazing place, they will begin to want it so much that they will do whatever it takes to make it come true.

Women are already playing a dominant role. Look around you and you will see that it's true. As the Dalai Lama said in 2009: "The world will be saved by the Western women." Well, here we are, and we are doing it.

### **Who is your favorite activist? Author?**

[Rob Hopkins](#), the founder of the Transition Movement, is one of my favorite people. I have too many other favorites to mention. The same with favorite authors, but [Vandana Shiva](#) springs to mind, both as an activist and author. I'm a big

fan of anybody who is doing anything towards the restoration of our earth, however great or small.

### **Can the Earth be our "God?"**

I always resonated with the quote by Frank Lloyd Wright: "I believe in God, only I spell it N.A.T.U.R.E."

### **Wow! What is a permaculture oasis? Who lives there?**

It's a lush, productive garden of Eden. An interdependent, interconnected network of abundant and nourishing relationships between plants, animals, insects, birds, people, water, earth and sky. We all live here together, and get to appreciate and feast from the bounty of our lives. We can all live like this, all the time. It's up to us. We are the gardeners we've been waiting for.

### **What is your favorite nature-based myth?**

Wangari Maathai's [hummingbird with fire](#). The perfect story of doing the best you can, even when the odds are stacked against you. Never give up hope.

**Raven Gray, Co-founder & President**

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## **Baba Rampuri**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1621>

**"The world looked very different when I entered an ancient order of yogis and shamans in 1970. Anyone even suggesting that yoga would be mainstream one day, would have been sent to the funny farm. And yet, the very fact of yoga becoming mainstream, and taking on a life and an identity of its own, has tended to obscure the very traditions from which it arose.**

**The advance of modern civilization, cutting down the wilderness to build towns and cities and the farms that feed them has resulted in endangering numerous plant and animal species. In the same way, species of Knowledge are threatened when their means of transmission loses authority." - Baba Rampuri.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **What are species of Knowledge? Are they in the West?**

When I speak about species of knowledge disappearing, I am using the analogy of species of animals and plants disappearing. Since I tend to see the world in terms of resemblances and reflections, and see all things as interconnected, the greater analogy of species of anything disappearing speaks of our contracting universe. Orwell addressed this in the thirties.

I am not measuring the contracting universe in terms of distances, size of measurable space, but in our perception and knowledge of it. Our Speech is contracting, even our languages are shrinking, which can be measured in our vocabularies.

Until the so-called "Green Revolution" of the 60's in India, 42,000 folk landraces of rice were known to exist there. Since that time when high yield varieties of rice were introduced and aggressively marketed, agriculture became an industry, and competitive national and international markets matured, more than 95% of these landraces have disappeared and only 23 varieties of rice dominate the entire market. Farmers can no longer afford to grow what their ancestors grew and have abandoned these varieties their families developed over the millennia, adapted to local circumstances and needs. The same is true with many food stuffs in India and around the world.

The historical root of our environmental crisis and our loss of wisdom traditions lies in the European Enlightenment that nurtured a conceptual dichotomy between the Natural World and the Human World. We have detached ourselves from the Natural World and gambled our entire existence on the somewhat fickle ideas and ideologies of man.

Like our extinct (local) folk landraces of rice, our wisdom traditions, our species of knowledge are also local. There are no universal truths, no perennial philosophies, and no ideologies to proselytize. If it's local, there is no one to convince. Local species of knowledge are well diversified encompassing all areas of human endeavor, and in fact most of our modern technology and pharmacology was plundered from the storehouse of local knowledge.

The authority of the voice of local knowledge was lost to the authority of the mass printed text, the school (so that you could read the mass printed text), then the television, and now the computer screen and mobile telephone. And as we progress through this, our new information (that replaces knowledge) has less and less a connection to the Natural World and more to the fallible ideas of man.

### **Can you teach ancient ways (Traditional Knowledge?) and heal people via the Internet?**

Personally, I feel that the disadvantages of the computer and Internet for mankind far outweigh the advantages. Nevertheless, it is the reality of our times and in many ways is defining our times, so we have as little choice to adapt to it, and adapt well to it, as we did to post-Gutenberg literacy. In the same way the printing press was the beginning of the

end of Oral Tradition, i.e., Traditional Knowledge, the Internet will do the same for Literary Knowledge. Each time this kind of quantum change takes places, there is a contraction of Speech.

The Internet is not the place for traditional knowledge, but for information that very often lacks context. Traditional knowledge requires the sound and authority of a voice and its supporting chorus.

Healing, however, can be done at a distance, and I would imagine that the networking of social media could bring to healers those seeking their help, and possibly heal them. I have done some of this, and recognize that there are many unexploited resources on internet that could work very well.

I think we are going through a major change in Speech right at this moment, parallel with growth of Internet literacy. Twitterspeak, which for most people is a contracted language, can also be used as a compressed language. Patanjali, well known for his Yoga Sutras, composed in a highly compressed style of Sanskrit, millennia before zip files, allowing for decompression by his lineage and wisdom tradition. For others, they must be satisfied with interpretation. More than 2000 years after it was composed, several editions are in the top couple thousand best sellers on Amazon.

To try to do old things with this new medium is missing the point. Despite their loss of meaning, words have suddenly obtained great power for gaining audiences and giving power and authority to their articulators. The power and utility of the internet will continue to grow alongside our new Speech.

### **What is the green movement like in your part of India?**

We have a very different situation here in India than in the West. Most of India was completely green until fairly recently. Western multinationals came in very big in the 60's with their "Green Revolution" based on chemical fertilizers, high yield seed varieties, and lots of hype, but even until 20 years ago, the vast majority of farmers still used cow manure.

With the exception of Claude Alvares and Vandana Shiva, two brilliant individuals, the green movement has been somewhat lackluster in India, largely because they are too ideological, and not really prepared to deal with ground realities.

### **What are some of your favorite children's stories? Are they still relevant to you?**

My favorite children's story is Salman Rushdie's novel, "[Haroun and the Sea of Stories](#)," which, I admit, is a postmodern allegory disguised as a children's book.

Because the Water Genie, Iff, has cancelled his famous Storyteller father's subscription to the supply of imagination, the Journey of this Hero, Haroun, is to the hidden Story Moon where the Sea of the Streams of Stories is being polluted by the Prince of Silence. Haroun leads the way in a brave attempt to save the Ocean, and then returns to his city, bringing back the gift of storytelling to his father, and thus brings back happiness to his city, because now the citizens can remember its name.

It takes a theme we all relate to, pollution and polluters, that has enormous relevance today in the wake of the BP disaster, and yet moves past the facts and information, which are the manipulated resources for political narrative, and into allegory and analogy by means of masterful use of Speech to create compelling entertainment. We can come to our own conclusion that there is something greater than the event of the BP disaster itself, which is the cause, itself. There is an even greater pollution taking place which is the cause of the individual events of pollution that we witness.

The book was published in 1990, while Rushdie was in hiding from the Fatwah to kill him because of his book, "Satanic Verses." Yet, we can see that good storytelling, such as this, easily applies to events occurring many years later.

### **How can we produce new mythologies? What are the ingredients?**

Please react to [planetshifter.com/node/1612](http://planetshifter.com/node/1612)

There is a large difference between spinning a narrative, and storytelling. Storytelling exists because it entertains, and when it entertains, it commands an audience. Even Samuel Goldwyn told his screenwriters that if they had a message, then send a telegram (email), it's a lot cheaper. Storytelling, Mythology is about analogy, which gives a story its entertainment value. The old woman on the edge of the forest didn't tell her stories because she had a point to make, an ideology to market, she told them because she knew them, and that's what she did. She didn't make them up - she found them, in the voice of her grandmother, in the voice of the forest.

Narratives are an attempt to give political context to information, this is not mythology. We call this "The News." The Authority of this voice comes from its volume and the size of its audience. Narratives use the paradigm of the myth, good guys, bad guys, the quest, bringing balance into the world, the final showdown, and the return home. But where Mythology is connected to the Sky, to the Earth, to the hearts and blood of man, a Narrative is connected to the ideas, ideologies, and strategies of man. Whereas conflicting facts tend to destroy a narrative, they grow a myth. Facts and information are central to the narrative, but have considerably less importance in a myth. Narratives are located in the discourse of a particular place at a particular time, Mythology crosses time and space.

### **What is your Creative Source? Can I experience it?**

You can experience your own creative source. My creative source is a witches' cauldron of my blood, my lineage, and the relationships I have with the Spirits of the Natural World who whisper things in my ears. If you listen carefully, they will speak to you as well.

### **Are you using and/or refining alchemy?**

Actually, alchemy is a interesting connection point between East and West, because it gives us an opportunity to consider a different kind of vocabulary when thinking about India, and especially Oral Tradition. Spiritual India is normally represented in the West with a human sciences' vocabulary of Comparative Religion or Psychology, which gives a very distorted result. But, if we should use the vocabulary of Hermeticism, with its focus on connecting with the Natural World, as opposed to mapping things according to the categories of discourse & connecting with only fickle ideas of the time, I find a convenient bridge to allow sharper commentary and interpretation.

I use Indian Alchemy, which I don't think of as a science, but a knowledge that must be gleaned from Nature and one's lineage, not on the basis of a rational methodology and discursive reasoning, but through experience, exposure, intimacy, and invocation. So, the task is an ongoing one of knowing oneself and knowing the Natural World, and seeing the mirror reflection between the two; there is no issue of refining Alchemy, as such. That being said, I have been slowly converting to more modern apparatus, and adapting to the technology that is readily available.

### **How do you define sustainability? Is this a new religion?**

Sustainability only becomes an issue when human greed crosses a line, unbalancing the world. We've obviously arrived there. I don't think sustainability is possible until somehow we come to grips with our greatest myth (sic) that consumption makes happiness. As long as that myth is the foundation of our connection to the world and its inhabitants, there will be no sustainability, no matter how sustainable it seems at the time.

There is no sustainability in the ideas and strategies of man, even the dreams of man, but the Natural World which includes man, provides the means to reach the limits of sustainability.

### **When you think about integration, what are the key tools for human organizing?**

The easiest way of human organizing is along the lines of ideology, so that one is empowered to protect, defend, and promote what one believes. The weaker the substance of the belief, the stronger the need to defend or promote it. It's always been very difficult to organize conscious people for this reason.

I think back to May '68 in France, when the students and workers organized perhaps one of the greatest displays of civil disobedience, stopping the entire country for several days to cause the public to think about some wrongs in society. It was a time of incredible hope for a more conscious future, and a surge of confidence in the power of the people to change things. If we look at those who organized this great event, we discover that many of them are now part of the very bureaucracy they opposed and fought to defeat.

Ideology is the expedient way to organize humans, but is not sustainable. Ideology is fickle, and almost always changes with the times. Let's not forget that the architects of neo-Imperialism, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc., were 60's radicals. One of Bush's top speechwriters wrote for one of America's most radical magazines of the 60's.

### **What do humans need to learn to evolve to a higher consciousness?**

We require no further evolution, if there is indeed any evolution of consciousness, to reach a higher state of consciousness, as it is already within us, at least its potential. In fact, just to take another shot at consumerism, we don't need to acquire, consume, or "learn" anything. It's the "learning" that is the problem in a nutshell. If we don't "un-learn" what we have learned in the past couple hundred years, our humankind will become extinct. For that, we must each take responsibility for our individual consciousness.

What do we not know... We have forgotten how to connect to the Natural World, to the earth, the sky, the plants, the topography, the family blood, and all that makes it very difficult for us to connect with our selves. We are evolving, if you can call it that, to a virtual consciousness, in which our Speech, instead of connecting to the world, connects with networks of words.

We have to learn that consumption does not lead towards happiness. Our lives are about doing and making, not taking. We have to learn how to give back all the stuff we have taken in the last couple hundred years. It requires a great deal of self de-construction to rediscover who we are and what is our relationship to this planet.

**Baba Rampuri**

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## Steve Tibbetts, Guitarist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1626>

mother's hand  
her book of tools  
guitars love worn down to glass

swimming in Chandogra  
soft exploding sands and purple black moon sets  
arms evolve  
treading clay  
hair on my neck stands up as scales  
climb awake  
future day

Natural Causes

\* \* \* \* \*

### Interview with Steve Tibbetts by Will Paul - July 4th, 2010

**You have journeyed to far-away places to collaborate with other artists. Like a hero in Joseph Campbell's eyes.**

Yes, I've traveled to far-away places. But it would be a stretch to find any commonality with Joseph Campbell's paradigm of "The Hero's Journey." I had always wanted to travel, and as a musician you get lots of opportunities to join travel with the creative process.

Lots of opportunities came up, and I took all of them. Any modern-day self-styled Odysseus would be a little suspect in my book, given the ease of intercontinental travel. For instance, I traveled to Mt. Kailash last year, and, while the travel was difficult, it was easy to arrange, and fairly painless to undertake. If you compare that with the trials one would undergo even 50 years ago it was a walk in the park. Easy. Not exactly a "hero's journey."

**I think the real hero's journey takes place in solitary retreat.**

\* [sacredsites.com/asia/tibet/mt\\_kailash.html](http://sacredsites.com/asia/tibet/mt_kailash.html)

\* [retreatfoundation.org/](http://retreatfoundation.org/)

**How do you prepare the listener for the resultant information?**

The only preparation I've tried to make for listeners is in writing copious press releases for the record companies and decent liner notes for the CDs themselves. I've also put up some pages on my site to help people get some background:

\* [stevetibbetts.com/558/](http://stevetibbetts.com/558/)

\* [stevetibbetts.com/shocking-asia/](http://stevetibbetts.com/shocking-asia/)

Sometimes I think that it's best not to explain too much about one's music. I have faith that the listener's mind will find its own way, so an attitude of "**underpreparation**" might be more suitable.

**Are you at peace with your human form and soul? I feel a higher stirring sometimes when I close my eyes and listen to your music.**

Yes, I enjoy being in my body. I make it work out every other day. I feed it coffee and chocolate sometimes. If I play well in right field at our Wednesday night softball games I let it have a cigarette to go with the beer I am pouring into its mouth. "Playing well" means I have to have caught all the fly balls that came to right field, and gotten at least one hit when I was up to bat. That's the rule. Then everything is peaceful.

I don't know what a "soul" is, exactly. Mind? Thoughts? Memories? It's hard to pin anything down as existing as a particular essence. I don't think there is a separate, single, and permanent self or soul.

### **What does your innovation process require to make authentic sound?**

I recorded this CD without much EQ or compression. I mixed it in a concert hall, in order to utilize natural reverb. That might qualify as "authentic."

We make our own samples. Marc and I have recorded drums, gongs, and natural sounds in our travels. The sounds are ours, like clay we dug up and fired ourselves. Is that "authentic?"

### **What is community? Can you describe the web of human and natural relationships that drive your art?**

I don't know that relationships drive much of what I do. I had some wild years between 1985-96 that drove the insane electric guitars on "**Exploded View**" and "**The Fall of Us All**." Lots of webs formed and dissolved. I wouldn't want to re-live those years, or re-live some parts of them, but the time certainly drove the music.

### **What is your purpose here on Earth?**

I think it would be a little arrogant for anyone to say they have a "purpose" on earth. We're just animals. Mammals. Suppose your dog or cat started talking about their purpose on earth. Wouldn't you be a little surprised? Having a purpose would presuppose that someone gave you one. That's a little self-centered.

### **You are a shaman. This is central knowledge when I "get" Steve Tibbetts. Your view?**

I am not a shaman. **Shamans are trained from youth**. I just wanted to be in a band like Blue Cheer. Vincebus Eruptum. Hendrix, Parker, and Coltrane might have been shamans.

### **I confess: I do not know what the names of your songs mean on Natural Causes. How important are song and album names in the meditation?**

The titles aren't that important. But, they do have something to do with the music. You just have to search for the meanings yourself! One caveat: there's not much to find out. Better to spend that time listening to a shaman like Coltrane. "A Love Supreme."

### **When the band collaborates with high spirit and merges into One force, where are you physically?**

Oh, probably right there, stage-right. Sweating a little.

### **Tell us about sonic initiation, alchemy and the metaphor – as you transmit or convey your heart message through notes, phrases and song.**

I don't really understand this question.

### **What are the sounds from pre-history that inform your work? Do you sample Nature?**

Who would know anything about sounds from pre-history? By definition, they would be unknowable. I do like folding in the sounds of chanting in such a way that they lurk just under other sonic features: cymbals, drums, and so on. It gives a sort of "voice" to the instruments. These sorts of sounds rest just under the threshold of consciousness. It's fun to play with perception in that way.

I don't actively sample nature. However, in sampling gongs and other instruments in Bali, I found that the sounds of frogs, bugs, and chickens were also recorded. I left those sounds in. It gives the samples a nice organic buzz on the top.

### **Are you working in sustainability?**

I have an electric bike. By coincidence, I took delivery of it on September 9, 2001. It's a Bridgestone XO, outfitted with a Curry electric motor. I've put about 3000 miles on it, and ride it to my studio from April until November. The only other real nod I've made towards sustainability is being a vegetarian.

**I find it difficult to take anyone's exhortation of sustainability seriously if they're eating a hot dog.** A politician friend here, for instance, held a meat raffle to raise money for global warming awareness. That's similar to sending one's slaves out to do literature drops or door knocking for civil rights.

Eventually, however, in a million years, things will work out. Humans will have gone extinct, and DNA will have recombined into some new form.

The only other project I'm involved in that might warrant the moniker of "sustainability" is a retreat foundation I'm working on with a friend. If nothing else, being in retreat for a month or two takes people completely off the grid.

### **How do you think women's reverence for the sacred differs from men's?**

I'm not sure that there is a difference. **I've known batshit-crazy women and saint-like men.** I do believe that having children connects one to the web of life in a visceral, down-to-earth way that men can never know.

### **Share a favorite myth please. What stories are critical to your spirit these days?**

I like reading Jung's " [Red Book](#)." Have you seen that? Well worth a look.

\* \* \* \* \*

Please enjoy my [first interview with Steve Tibbetts and Marc Anderson](#)

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## Rachel Kaplan, Urban Homesteader and Somatic Psychotherapist

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1628>

...nurture all that is authentic by acknowledging three simple realities: nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect. To accept these realities is to accept contentment as the maturation of happiness, and to acknowledge that clarity and grace can be found in genuine unvarnished existence. Filled with subtlety and depth, this way is a river flowing toward and away from you, and always within you. -- Richard Powell (from RK's email sig file)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **What are the common values and principles in the Petaluma community?**

Petaluma's a pretty diverse place for Sonoma County (which is a not-so-diverse place in and of itself)--a mix of old-time ranchers, new-time immigrants from the city, suburban families with no interest in sustainability, Latino families some of whom are progressive and others who aren't, a progressive community, some artists on the edges.

I think there are common values in respect for the land and for family, but our town is split by politics, class and race, just like most American cities. Our town is also split by Highway 101 and I don't know if it's just me, but it seems that the dividing line of geography has either created or been created by a dividing line of values. Of course this isn't totally uniform (there are progressives and eco-freaks living on the east side of the freeway and mainstream folks living in the west), but the east side is characterized by McMansions and a motor boat in every driveway and a lot of lawns and fertilizer and wasted energy, while the west side has more of a conservation ethic, lawns turning into gardens and bicyclists and more life on the street where people encounter one another.

There is a strong environmental ethic in Sonoma County in general, we're one of the most progressive counties in the country and breaking ground on sustainability initiatives like greywater reuse and backyard gardening, but there are people here who are spraying with round-up and watering their sidewalks in the middle of the day. This is a town that can't even come to a consensus about whether or not it's a good idea to put a hideous asphalt plant on the edge of a bird sanctuary. (You can see where I stand on the issue.)

I guess I'm stumped on this one: it seems like Petaluma isn't unified at all, but represents the polarity that characterizes present-day America--call it red/blue, haters/lovers, wasters/conservers--we're constantly riding an edge of difference between us.

### **Tell us about the geo-spirituality at your urban homestead!**

I love this question. Part of my story is about a search for home and belonging, a long history of moving from place to place looking for something that felt right. We came to this particular place, which we call Tiny Town Farm, after being forced to move from a rental property. That karmic kick in the pants finally made it clear that the search for home was out of our hands, and pretty much an inside job. It wasn't about finding the perfect farm, our own little acre. It was about how we felt about where we lived, and our ability to really root in place. We felt pretty defeated when we landed here, but we also knew we weren't going to be moving any time soon. Our daughter said, "We're not moving again for like 15 years, right?"

Instead of living temporarily the way we had in other rentals, we just started digging in. My partner became a beekeeper, my daughter asked for a garden, and slowly, over a few years, we've put in vegetable beds, fruit trees, perennials and plant guilds, taken on bees and rabbits and cats and dogs, built a chicken coop around the corner with some friends, harvested grapes from the arbor, and made friends with the neighbors. We really live here now, it's our place. And there's something spiritual about feeling like we are in our place.

Do we own it? We do not. Does it matter? Yes, and no. Let's face it: we're all temporary tenants in the temple of the earth. We're just passing through. So that's the most geo-spiritual thing I have to say: we live where we live in love and

whether we own it is irrelevant. We're taking care of our little piece of earth, and that's a deep and good thing. That's the thing I think we all need to learn: how to take care of the place where we live as if we belonged there. We're not waiting for the next best place, or the perfect place, or our acreage out in the country, our communal land base where everyone we've ever loved decides to live. That dream died when we moved here, and now we're living the living-in-place dream.

We're on a small city lot, surrounded by other people. It's not quite big enough for us--we can't get a goat or really plant an orchard. Our daughter longs for more animals. So it's not perfect, but it's good. We know and love our neighbors and we look out for them and they look out for us. It's that silly Dorothy thing: There's no place like home. And that sums up the spirit of place to me, which is what I interpret that funny word "geo-spiritual" to mean.

### **How do you preserve food? Do you use Bell jars?**

I preserve food by canning, fermenting, drying, freezing and storing. I use mason jars -- with NEW LIDS every time. I can about 35 quarts of stone fruit sauce, 20 quarts of apple sauce, 15 quarts of pickles, some jam, some food inventions like peach and apricot yum, as well as other things like figs, when I can find them, or green sauce made out of tomatillos. I gather a lot of persimmons in the fall and dry them on the dehydrator, or freeze them in the freezer to make crumbles, cakes and soups. I also make things with tomatoes because I grow so many --tomato sauce, tomato juice, and dried tomatoes. I turned the grape harvest into grape juice last year and canned it up and we drink it every Friday night for our Shabbat meal. That saved us a lot of money--it costs about \$4/bottle for grape juice. 52 weeks a year = about \$200. I make a lot of soup in the summer which feeds us in the winter. This summer my onions all bolted because of the combination of too much water and heat, so I turned them into yummy onion soup. That'll be nice to eat in November and December.

### **What is the Homegrown Guild at Daily Acts? What have you accomplished?**

The Homegrown Guild is Daily Acts' "permaculture in action" arm. Daily Acts does a lot of tours and workshops, exposing people to lots of different, beautiful strategies for sustainable living. The Homegrown Guild is an opportunity to apply this knowledge, with other people, in your daily life. We have a [listserv](#) to announce events, share resources and questions, and to organize. You can go to yahoo groups and sign on, if you're interested.) We've set up gardens with people and greywater projects and taught workshops in canning and chicken keeping and mushroom growing, sponsored potlucks and seed swaps and cider pressing parties. We've installed cob benches and cob ovens. We run a program called the Garden Wheel, where people help one another establish their gardens as a community effort. So we've accomplished some community building, some efficient use of labor and time, and some regenerative design of people's places. We've had fun.

Individual households have accomplished a lot in terms of resource conservation and the implementation of different permaculture projects like greywater systems, installation of food forests, and waste management strategies. Here's a note on this (from my book): "In 2009, Daily Acts' Homegrown Guild produced over 3,000 pounds of food, foraged another ton of local fruit, harvested over 4,000 pounds of urban waste to be composted and mulched, planted over 185 fruit trees and hundreds of varieties of edible and habitat plants, installed five greywater and rainwater catchment systems which saved and recycled tens of thousands of gallons of water, tended to bees, chickens, quail, ducks, and rabbits, and worked toward reducing energy use and enhancing commuting and transportation goals. Six households. Imagine a city where a majority of people tended to many of their daily needs in this way--the amount of food and water and energy and waste that could be sustainably managed is incredible. Our small daily actions towards the things that sustain us have an enormous impact."

The Homegrown Guild is providing working models of urban permaculture--things people can do on small or medium-sized lots to make their lives more sustainable as part of Daily Acts' mission to educate and inspire people to new ways of living.

### **For a typical urban permaculture project, what is needed for success?**

A can do attitude is essential. A willingness to experiment, make mistakes, and keep trying. Some information (which is easily accessible on line or in the library). It's good to ask questions of people who know -- there are a lot of great farmers and homesteaders around who can teach you lots of things. So I guess humility is a good thing to have, the ability to say: "I don't know. Teach me."

Taking a permaculture design course is a great thing if you have the time and resources. I especially like the 4-Seasons format where you can learn the material over time.

I think you also need to have a willingness to challenge yourself on some things which are just not accepted in our culture--composting your own poop, for example--and living in a way that others might find odd, challenging, disrespectful, messy or intimidating. You have to care more about the world you want to live in than the world we live in now in terms of directing your actions towards a generative future. You have to not care too much about new stuff, and employ a pretty solid reuse ethic. You have to have a little space to grow, and a lot of inspiration to think outside the box.

What's success? Does it mean trying, even if you fail? Does it mean doing it right the first time? Does it mean keeping ongoing, no matter what? Does it mean creating intelligent designs that use your energy and the energy of life around you to good uses? Some of these things matter in creating a permaculture project, others don't (like doing it right the first time, which isn't even a goal.) Aligning your energies with you own ideas of success seems like a good start.

### **What is preventing mass public acceptance and implementation of residential grey water systems?**

Lack of information and skill which leads to a lack of willingness. I think it's mostly lack of information. People have been taught that greywater is pathogenic, and so they are afraid to use it. Being able to show working greywater systems that are simple to install, easy to use, and safe would be a really big step in getting them more mainstreamed.

[Greywateraction.org](http://Greywateraction.org) is a great resource for this, and also [Oasis Designs](http://Oasis Designs).

### **Is raising chickens in the city a good idea?**

You bet. Chickens work great in a small or large backyard. They give great eggs and will weed your garden for you and deposit nitrogen-rich fertilizer on the beds while they're doing it. They are more fun to watch than television.

The most important thing in keeping chickens in the city is to have a good, solid coop for them that is predator-proof and not located under your neighbor's window. They need an area where they can roll in the dust and walk around during the day. They need to be in a flock. A solitary chicken is a sad thing.

If you assess how much space you have to keep the chickens, and whether or not you have the time to take care of them (a few minutes in the morning, a few minutes in the evening) and find that you have both space and time, I highly recommend chickens for the backyard farm. Once you've tasted those eggs, you won't go back again.

If you don't eat eggs, or have a big enough yard, or the time in your life to tend them, I'd give the chicken a good miss. Maybe rabbits or bees would be better!

### **How does your work in somatic psychotherapy weld with your permaculture endeavors?**

It is my sense that healing the personal body and healing the earth body is the same work, the micro and macro level of the same thing. The small dance makes the big dance possible. When we change ourselves, we change the world.

When I work as a psychotherapist, I am helping people understand what is happening in their whole being--their mind, their body, their spirits--and collaborating with them to realize their own personal renewal. When I work as a permaculturist, I am learning what is happening in the whole system, and working to make connections and alignments toward the value of renewing the earth. These seem like similar practices to me, though the materials are different.

Working through the body is an excellent way to resolve traumatic events from the past, just as working in a regenerative way with the earth is an excellent way to resolve traumatic ecological events from the past. Working through the body helps us become more present to what is actually happening around us. This has obvious value in this time of significant social change, and is a skill that can be applied in many different ways.

I work with people to apply permaculture principles to their lives--exploring how values of listening and observing, valuing the edges and the marginal, recycling and storing energy, or creatively responding to change matter to people's individual psychology and life designs. Permaculture for personal healing seems like an obvious connection when what we seek is intelligent design, right use of energy, and alignment with positive principles for living.

Deepening an awareness of personal change in the context of cultural transitions is another way permaculture and somatics overlap. I offer something I call Transition Time Coaching to help people move through changes in their lives. This process is for people who are going through personal transitions (divorce, loss of work or family member, child leaving home, etc..), but also for people who are tuned in to the larger cultural changes that are unfolding at this time. It's about finding embodied practices for riding the rapids of change.

If people are interested in this kind of work, I encourage them to call me at 415-269-2721. I am happy to meet with people for a free introductory session or to talk more about how somatic psychology can serve the same goals as permaculture.

**Rachel Kaplan**

Rachelkap at fullcup.info

## **Craig Anderson, LandPaths Executive Director**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1635>

### **LandPaths connects you to land by getting you outside to:**

Bike, paddle, wheelchair, (use a) walker, ride, hike, farm, build trail, burn slash, (with your) school class, rebuild cabin, raise barn, install solar on cabin, lay irrigation lines, cut firewood, patrol trails, clean culverts, rebuild culverted channels, grow peppers and tomatillos, salvage old growth wood from barns, cull pigs & turkeys, break bread with new friends, find and revisit sit spots, bird watch, star gaze, relocate salmon from puddle to creek with hats, search for lost hikers, rock climb, plan trails, mend fences, chip Douglas fir, tell stories, camp out, play soccer in pasture, cook a meal in field with fresh-picked produce, plant-water-weed-water and weed native plants (repeat), smack rocks (w/rock hammer), build fairy houses at base of trees, fly kites, pick berries, walk up a creek, paddle through phosphorescence, find pictures in clouds, listen in silence, climb trees, hoot for owls, inventory natural resources, collect/eat edibles, search for frogs, fish, tide pool, swim, make wreaths/baskets, play music outside, roll down hills, listen to stories, find topographic diversity for answering the call, follow lady bugs and ants on knees, climb a tree, dig, drive tractor and shovel compost.

**With your help, we will continue to add to this list and 'feel the thrill' of being outside.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Interview with Craig by Willi**

#### **What are the key values that you are teaching kids through LandPaths?**

"Kids" for LandPaths is anyone and of any age who is open to the notion that deepening – and in many cases just establishing - a relationship with the wild and working landscapes of Sonoma County is an act that can dramatically expand meaning in life, deepens a sense of community and ultimately helps the natural communities that define our shared, incomparable landscape. That said, we try to "teach" the beauty of this place – that the fog-blown headlands of the Sonoma Coast and bone dry oaks and madrones of the Mayacamas come August are equally, if not more so, satisfying to the soul than the waterfalls of Yosemite, the depths of Lake Tahoe or anywhere else in the world one might travel to.

The destination is here, the stories are here, the food is waiting to be grown in our own front yard gardens and the county's trails need their stewardship to stay clear, the local parks need their volunteer hours and sweat to stay open, the local businesses their \$ to stay thriving and the local watersheds and creatures their informed and active participation in caring for.

#### **What values are common from the kids when they first enter a program?**

To answer this question fully it would have to be posed to our Education Program Director and Assistant Director, Bree and Lansia, respectively. I would venture that all kids, while they may be over-stimulated with urban distractions and technology that would seemingly compete for their attention, that they're down to the last one actually quite open and easy to reach and inspire with what LandPaths sells: a relationship with land and place. In other words, all kids are open to the outdoors – whether a working landscape or the wilds – because it's arguably the most amazing thing that anyone has to offer to another person. Let's face it, take them from the parking lot of a big box store one afternoon and let them wander the next morning up a creek beneath big-leafed maple and alder, with caddis fly abounding on every rock and shaded water trickling below dragonflies...there's nothing those stores can possibly sell that competes with nature's grandness!

A sense of wonder for how they're connected to land, a sense of humor outside when allowed to express it and amazing creativity in capturing story and poem and watercolor in their journals – these are values that all children share in our education program, In Our Own Backyard. Last, unbridled curiosity – in the most articulate form – is something our kids

share when they are allowed to discover the wild creek, explore the working farm or sit face to face with an 80-something rancher of Portuguese or Italian ancestry to learn about the 'real culture connected to place that is alive and well.'

### **Nice. A balance between hands-on learning and time for reflection. How do you program this synergy?**

I don't know that any of us at LandPaths would pretend that it's really all that hard. The open landscape does most of the work, we're just the guides. And this 'synergy' you allude to is something that impacts both the school-aged kids and the "kids" of all ages that help us steward one of the only nonprofit-managed State Parks in California (Willow Creek), two of LandPaths own wildland preserves (outside Occidental and Healdsburg) and the first "Farm-based Park" (Bayer Farm in Roseland neighborhood of Santa Rosa). More specifically, we try not to over-plan our forays into the outdoors... but instead do as you note, to provide that 'balance' by simply giving every group some chance to touch the soil, ideally through the act of "sweat equity," and moments of quiet as well as the opportunity to speak up to the larger group.

All people have something to share, whatever their level of expertise or non-experience. The omission from a new-be that "this is great, this is what I've been longing for" is just as powerful an inspired talk by an expert in ornithology. I suppose that providing space for people to relate to the local land in all its diverse forms and in a diversity of ways (hike, wheelchair, nightwalk, paddle, ride, in languages other than English, sleep beneath the stars) is in many ways an art form that we have been working on for 13 years...and it's a balance created by years of practice and simply watching for what works.

### **Is LandPaths doing permaculture?**

If permaculture is an attempt at fashioning the human world based on the natural one, I would venture that yes, LandPaths strives for this in everything it does. While our agricultural efforts thus far are humble (but having a significant impact in the Roseland community at Bayer Farm), I would say that our park management models, our schools program, even our new "hut-to-hut" initiative – that they're all based on tried and true ways that people have interacted with land for thousands of years.

That is, we try to lift from those examples where nature is respected as instructor and not to be tinkered with before observing what's working, what not, and we try to manage land using community members' sweat and ideas – versus a more traditional model of policing for the lowest common denominator. Perhaps what we're practicing is more "cultural permaculture?" It's about observing what's worked well, honoring land and respecting people's ability and intentions...that they already "get it" before we have to fill them with ideas. Sure, there's always some leading that needs to take place of the uninitiated and keeping frost-damaged fruit from spreading to the entire bushel, but we start with "the answer is probably right in front of us and already been practiced effectively and efficiently without having to reinvent it."

### **How do you experience the spirits in The Grove?**

By just walking and listening. The Grove of Old Trees, its formal name, is the only privately-owned nature preserve free and open to the public in Sonoma County. It's an incredible place that has only been owned only thrice prior to LandPaths taking title in 2000, and two of those owners were logging families that logged much of the timber on the ridges within miles of the Grove. Therefore, "them is some powerful spirits in those giant, thousand year-old redwood trees!" It's an equally powerful place to LandPaths because we have a group of neighbors that have stepped up in the past two years to steward the preserve with us in partnership.

We hope it's a model for how a group of people, living around a landscape, can come together to take care of it so that we can keep adding new parks AND working farms and landscapes to the list of outdoor places protected forever. Imagine if every watershed or couple of miles along a road had a place like the grove where people not only steward that place, but come together over hard work and outdoor meals and indoor planning...that would be an incredible act of "community building." Through this snowballing effect, perhaps the spirits in the Grove are inspiring us to experience more than could ever be found in its mere 35 acres?

One thing is sure: we don't provide for an experience at the Grove by copious signs and heavy site improvements and request-for-donation-envelopes. It's about the majesty and awe found in an old-growth redwood forest. What more do you need than that?

### **Is sustainability the same as stewardship?**

Good question. Maybe it is. We'll know in the long-term, but I don't know that we can answer that with any sense of confidence right now. Stewardship to us is a long-termed commitment to a place, an observance of and listening to the land and everyone that's a part of it in order to find that 'beta' on where to point the nose of our proverbial craft as we enter the rapid. As for that other loaded word, my friend Peter Forbes quotes his next door neighbor in Vermont, a maple syrup or "sugarbush" farmer, after hearing about Peter's work in "sustainable communities" as saying "well, my marriage is just sustainable." That doesn't sound all that progressive, does it? Shouldn't we be aiming for "thriving" or something akin to that?

Even though I studied ecology at UC Berkeley I can't say I know for certain what "sustainability" is...and even if we did, who's the one to judge if we achieved it? Perhaps it loops back to "permaculture" – as in doing the best job mimicking natural systems for both improving the human-created environment and continuing agricultural practice. My guess is that the more listening we do, the more we incorporate the observation of our kids when they get outdoors, the more we learn the place-names given to us by the Pomo, Kashia, Wappo, Miwok, the more stories we can get out of the old ranching families that settled here and the more we pattern ourselves off the first thing here ( n a t u r e ), the closer to sustainable we'll be. One thing is for sure, we don't have a lot of spare time in which to waste not listening on how to get it right.

### **How does [DailyActs.org](http://DailyActs.org) relate to LandPaths?**

In as many ways as there are people interested in being inspired about how to live lighter, live healthier, live better and more connected to their community and physical place. For one thing, Daily Acts and LandPaths work to value the knowledge that's already here. Both organizations also try to impart that it goes well beyond just the rain water catchment system or the trail work day...it's the bigger ripples that occur out there that are unseen to us as staff, board, volunteers. For us that's the entire school that now has a recycling program because of the In Our Own Backyard students created it, or the front yard and abandoned lot gardens that have sprung up for blocks surrounding our Bayer Farm Park and Gardens. For Daily Acts and LandPaths both it's about empowerment of people and relationship – and ultimately care for – the place we live. And this takes a lot of partnering with our sister agencies both public and private, both nonprofit and local businesses.

### **Please explain just who these socioeconomically & ethnically diverse Sonoma County students are! How do their needs differ?**

They are students from urban schools that have native non-English speakers filling the majority of seats in the classroom, as well as European-American kids from middle class homes that have been to the ocean, have tasted a farmers-market bell pepper and have access to a shaded hiking or biking trail. We have kids in our programs from a minimum of 5 different cultural groups across Sonoma County and with a true spectrum of experience with the land. As we all know, the Latino population will continue to increase in Sonoma County over the coming years and their voice is important.

[The Bayer Farm](#) was borne in many ways to establish a relationship with a diverse (14 languages spoken in Roseland) – while largely Spanish-speaking community where we gather with people over three elements: farming, fun in the outdoors and healthy food.

Students' needs differ in terms of exposure to the outdoors, in part because access to land historically, and for many reasons, hasn't always been equal. For some, it's realizing that nature IS grand and more magical than the finest documentary displayed on an HD screen, for others it's a sense of belonging to "tribe" and "being of this place" when they are invited to play in a space that is so different than the built environment. Ultimately, all these kids "perform" by

virtue of wanting to come back to their adopted place, by incorporating what they learn and experience in their field sessions directly back into their classroom work, and by being increasingly inquisitive as they anticipate the next of their four visits from fall to spring. The opportunity to visit the same outdoor place four times during the course of the school year, with journal in hand and each with their own “adopted tree” – isn’t that something that all of our kids deserve to experience?

**Craig Anderson, Executive Director**

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## **Jonathan Young, PhD., The Center for Story & Symbol**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1641>

“Sacred stories continually show us how to align our energies and attention with the forces of the natural world. Such a connection often requires quieting ourselves in some formal way in order to be more receptive. In myth, we can see that it is from a silent attunement that we can get the crucial energy for the tasks that life sets before us. In the lore, shamanic healers use lengthy meditations and extensive rituals to be open to the magic that comes directly from the vitality of the living environment. As we ponder these wonders, we become aware that the world is animated by invisible threads that are beyond our conscious knowing.” JY

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### **Why are you only interested in serving psychologists, marriage & family therapists, teachers, social workers, nurses, and other mental health professionals? Where does the young song writer, digital artist and lay-man get the power of myth?**

Most of my work is with artists and seekers. The classes on the schedule at folkstory.com do qualify as continuing education for health professionals, but many others attend. There is another schedule on the site called Community Presentations that lists the many workshops I give for universities C.G. Jung Societies, Joseph Campbell Mythological Roundtable groups, retreat centers, and conferences. There has been quite a mythic revival since Joseph Campbell appeared on television with Bill Moyers. The resources section at folkstory.com has a list of links to opportunities for further study in the mythic imagination.

### **Are you finding mythic elements (imaginings) in Avatar?**

Some of the most mythic tales are now being told in movies. The studios were drawn to tell initiatory journey stories after George Lucas adapted Joseph Campbell to the screen in the Star Wars series. Avatar takes us to a place of mystery and shows the way toward meaning. We go on the adventure and, like the key characters, are invited to deep inner change. We are free to open the doors to perception or just take it as an entertainment.

Avatar reminds us of the ongoing choice between obsession with control – and the instinctual life in accord with nature. It is a collective challenge and a personal task. It is not just the greed of giant corporations. We are all tempted to dominate nature, both internally and externally. Much is lost if we indulge in the worship of control. A reflective inner life involves yielding to emotion, intuition, and creativity. That is the path of imagination and beauty.

### **What do you mean by “archetypal perspective?” How does this work in the real world of the mythologist?**

Carl Jung explained the idea of universal patterns or images that appear in dreams, myth, and art. Each person has a unique pattern of these components of the imagination but the building blocks are shared. Taking an archetypal perspective is looking for these key elements in a story and considering what guidance the images might offer. The symbols in the story mirror the qualities within. Studying these archetypal patterns in myths or movies can help us integrate our energies more fully.

### **You write about “identifying with a character.” Please give us details on how this works?**

One rewarding exercise is to review favorite stories from childhood. If a girl is drawn to the Cinderella story, she may be somebody who will be able to survive lengthy emotional hardship and find meaning in life. A boy who likes the knights of the round table may have the makings of a dedicated activist against injustice. It is fairly simple to notice which characters have held our interest over the years. Noticing how they manage the ordeals is crucial. Mythic stories help us through the heartbreaking disasters by showing us the way through the dark night of the soul.

### **How has the process / place of the (classic) story and message changed with YouTube, iPads and cable TV?**

One big effect of the increase in media options has been a flowering of narrative. We are in a golden age of story. Tales are more available that honor tragic experiences without the fake comfort of tidy answers. With all the emerging channels, there is probably more accessible wisdom than any previous time in history.

### **Is mythology evolving from the Hero's journey to new mechanisms and themes?**

Screenwriters got stuck on the Hero's journey for awhile as if the coming of age narrative is the whole of mythology. They are now discovering there are many other forms to be explored. There are several large transitions in a life. In psychology, we call them life-stage crisis experiences. These threshold moments make for good stories. The tale of the young hero is not the only great adventure. Mature stories may include greater nuance and ambiguity, such as the inner radiance we sometimes gain from loss and sorrow.

### **Is there a new "Holy Grail 2" out here to be cherished and shared, in the Sustainability Age?**

There is always a new Holy Grail. It is much like the old one. On an internal level, it can be a meaning or purpose strong enough to hold our attention. It may be finding a cause to serve that transcends mere self-interest. If you follow your bliss, it is possible to channel personal energies in a way that bridges selfishness and generosity – where the activities that are most rewarding are also the most useful to others.

**"You might even go back and revisit a story you loved years ago and see how it seems different. The difference is a reflection of how you have changed." Give us an example in your life?**

When I was young, Robin Hood seemed like a rowdy guy who stood up to authority. Now, his cause seems more elegant. It is to restore a true nobility of purpose.

### **Is bedtime a deliberate choice to heighten myths for kids?**

Myths, legends, sagas, and fairytales are not mainly children's literature. They were and are wisdom stories for all ages. Telling or reading mythic lore at bedtime is perfect at any stage of life because of the deep connections between the dreamlife and the mythic imagination. Pondering myths is one of the best methods of gaining a greater understanding of the messages to be found in dreams.

### **How are dreams, myths and alchemy related in your courses?**

My approach is to take familiar stories and discuss them from a mythic perspective. It may be an old tale or something more recent, like Lord of the Rings or The Chronicles of Narnia. Pondering the images for symbolic significance is the same as one would do with a dream. People who have taken an interest in their dreams are usually quick to notice the figurative dimensions of highly visual stories. Jung thought of alchemy as a system of transformative learning. If we ponder mythic stories seriously, it will change us in unexpected ways. If we choose to serve the larger unfolding stories of our lives – and our time, we can profoundly deepen the experience of being alive.

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## Vamsee Juluri, Hindu Mythology Writer

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1642>

### Mythology, Media and the Future of Hinduism

The gods of Hinduism have never been up there in some cold palace playing cruel whimsical games of fate with us humans. Instead, they have taken their place among us. They have let us call them friend, cousin, son, mother, teacher, and adore them as such. For it is only in relationships that we humans adore, and it is only in adoration that we learn the lessons of the gods: to live in friendship with ourselves and others, to attain a sense of justice in our actions, and to surrender to serenity. That is the story about our gods, and it is a story that has been told countless times over the millennia in words, songs, gestures, sculpture, and art.

Since the early 20th century, the stories of the gods have found new forms in the mass media. Indian cinema in its early years was almost entirely a mythological genre. Even when the Bombay film industry moved away from them, the thriving regional language cinemas of South India produced grand mythologicals well into the 1970s. In the 1980s, when Indian television came of age, its most popular serials were mythologicals.

The media boom of recent years brought forth a new wave of animated mythological shows and movies. And for nearly four decades, one distinguished comic book series, [Amar Chitra Katha](#), has made the stories of the gods familiar to young modern readers.

How the media retell these stories is a matter of some consequence. After all, for many Hindus, these stories are not just stories in the sense of fairy tales. These stories have been the templates for our lives, helping us see Krishna in our children or Shiva and Parvathi in our parents. We see them as more than entertainment, but how we see them today and how we will see them in the future is a crucial question.

Hindu myths have survived much over the centuries through a complex form of cultural negotiation and resistance against the forces of colonialism. In the present day, mythology may not seem overtly in danger of extinction, but it will have to be thought through carefully to remain as vibrant and vital as it has been.

At present, Hindu mythology is under strain from two opposite tendencies that are not entirely unrelated to broader debates about religion and politics in India and the diaspora. There seems to be a "didactic" extreme and an "experimental" extreme in present approaches to the tales of the gods. The didactic tendency views mythology as a litany of facts about history and geography.

It shows up in some of the recent animated mythological movies. The gods are depicted like pop culture superhero figures while a pedantic voice lists facts about them. The experimental tendency, on the other hand, sees mythology as open to virtually any sort of reinterpretation without regard to virtue or intent. Some artists and intellectuals espouse this view, and end up assuming that any imputation of sanctity to mythology is inherently fundamentalist.

Despite these unfortunate extremes, it is my belief that the tales of the gods, like the philosophy that is infused in them, like Hinduism as a whole, are deeper and more resilient than any constraint that our era can put on them. Commercialism may have turned mythology into a media formula, with virtually any movie being cited as a retelling of the Ramayana and Mahabharata; politics may have rubbed the stories of the gods the wrong way, from Right and from Left, leaving out the greatness of heart in them altogether. But when we look at the history of our "myths" more accurately, we will surely find what it was about them that made them both timeless and timely for so many generations. After all, even in the relatively short span that these tales have appeared in the media, there are great contributions only beginning to be acknowledged.

For instance, long before mythologicals allegedly provoked religious extremism by turning up on Indian television in the 1980s, they were sparking the spirit of Gandhi, social reform, and Indian independence in the stages and cinema halls of early 20th century India (seen in the work of film pioneers Phalke and Nagiah). The question for us to ask now is what

the tales of the gods need to liberate us from in the future. In an age of terrorism, wars, environmental degradation, financial hoaxes and mass mediated delusions, the need for the tales of the gods is stronger than ever. The challenge for us is simply to tell them better.

We are already telling ourselves more stories about the gods than ever before, thanks to new media technologies. But in order to tell ourselves better stories and stories that speak as much to new concerns as to old ones, we must avoid the extremes of the present moment. There are many new voices that are rising to the sky in praise of the gods in ways that make sense to us in the 21st century. [Devdutt Pattnaik's](#) work covers anthropology, philosophy, and art but speaks to us ultimately in one simple voice, of devotion. Sanjay Patel's vision of the gods shows freshness in their form and a charming 21st century American sort of coolness to them, without straying into irreverence at that. His child gods, delightful and divine all at once, are the best image for us to think of Hinduism's popular pantheon as it leads us into the future. It is as if each god is being reborn with each child that comes onto this earth, and it is up to us to learn to live and walk worthily among them once more.

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### **Interview with Vamsee Juluri by Willi Paul**

#### **How have we perverted the idea of adoration in the Sustainability Age?**

I think we have confused possession with adoration, especially in the stories that the media and consumer culture tell us. To adore is to stand aside from our own limited and limiting selves and simply appreciate others.

#### **Please give some examples of how you want us to surrender to serenity?**

I must admit my limitations in trying to answer this. How we surrender into serenity is simply our own journey. And I have barely started myself :)

#### **"Mythological Genre" and "Mythologicals" are unfamiliar to me. Can you explain what these productions usually entail?**

These are popular Indian movies about the stories of the lives of the gods. The productions are often spectacular, with great costumes, sets, and in some cases lots of poetry and song as well. Some of the actors who have played the gods in these movies have gone on to great political careers (a theme I explore in my novel).

#### **What stories are templates for USF students?**

A fascinating question--I am going to ask them when I get back to class.

#### **So you are saying that without the forces of colonialism, myth has been weakened as a force for good?**

Not at all. Colonialism attempted to destroy myth as a force for good by portraying it as mere superstition. Although the era of colonialism has officially ended we do feel its aftermath in many ways, economically, culturally and so on. In the present day, what we find is not necessarily an attempt to destroy myth as superstition, but a broad confusion about its role due to neocolonial and postcolonial biases that I hope the myth-makers of the future will sort out in a positive manner. -

#### **Is not the power of myth, in part, that it is open to virtually any sort of reinterpretation without regard to virtue or intent?**

Perhaps. But we must remember that some myths are held sacred, and we must understand what makes it sacred--I would much prefer that we impute sanctity on the basis of good intentions rather than force and fundamentalist proscription!

## **Who owns Hindu myths?**

If I may answer somewhat loosely but in some earnestness--all those with a good heart!

**"The question for us to ask now is what the tales of the gods need to liberate us from in the future." Please answer your question!**

Delusion. Cruelty. Greed. The rest, I believe, will follow.

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## **Michelle Ramona Silva, PhD. Digital Alchemist**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1645>

### **What do you see when you speak about the “residual effects of digital alchemy” as a ghost?**

Residual effect is really a metaphysical term because it is meant to describe how a material thing leaves a residue or remainder that is both material and spiritual (for lack of a better word). I stressed in the dissertation that we really don't have a language to describe this process. All attempts to artificially re-create life or create a 'thing' leave a residue that cannot be recycled back into the earth. This is how alchemy is analogous to the production of artifacts today. In visual texts the residual effect is an 'aura' or a temporal signature. In material things, residual effect is a trash heap of plastic that cannot be recycled back into the earth. This will be the basis of the book I'm working on.

So the whole body of work that I'm looking at is the relationship between the real and the artificial. This investigation was spawned by criticisms that I had as a graduate student with the field of cultural studies' overemphasis on how society produces artifacts and relatively ignoring the artifacts themselves. The ideology of this scholarship is that everything is socially determined and that is why one has to focus on cultural forces. There is a long intellectual or philosophical history to this position that I can't do justice to here. As an essentially Marxist theorist I largely agree with this position. I just thought we should switch our attention to the objects in and of themselves. In fact, even to say such a thing was to commit a kind of disciplinary blasphemy. I quickly realized how difficult it was to talk about things on their own terms without referring back to the social context that produced them. I needed a new language to look at artifacts that deserve far more analytical attention because of their political implications. The practice and language of alchemy helped me to do this.

### **Would you expect my neighbors at Pixar to be routinely discussing alchemy at the white board?**

I've noticed that interface designers, digital designers and engineers frequently go to the well of the mystical, ancient and mythological in naming their creations. For example: Rosetta Stone, Maya and there is company called Philosopher's Stone Software out there. I did come across a few papers for SIGGRAPH conferences that referenced alchemy but as I explain in the dissertation, most references to alchemy are merely meant as useful metaphors to some process of transformation. So, in short I wouldn't be at all surprised if your neighbors at Pixar might use alchemy in this way. I'm not sure that they actually think themselves alchemists, although my research shows they can be a delightfully wacky bunch so it would not surprise me. I'm impressed by the levels of interdisciplinary that occur among talented people in the real world that completely bypasses the comprehension of academics.

### **How is this ancient process communicated today?**

Alchemy is preserved today as metaphor, rather than as a practice. I expand upon its usefulness as an explanatory set of terms and symbols later in the interview.

### **Please define transmutation in a computer design context.**

According to my research of many SIGGRAPH papers and articles, the quest for realism (defined as the ability to 'trick the eye') was a strong, almost monomaniacal driving force in the industry. The "philosopher's stone" or "golden mean" would be if a designer could create a digital human that seemed real to the audience. I argue that as with the alchemists in the past, this goal is always just out of reach. Like the quest for the Holy Grail, or the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow in that the closer you think you get the further it slips away onto the horizon.

That designers were never really able to fool the audience into thinking they were looking at real actors was exemplified in the first watershed (for digital design the Holy Grail was the ability to create a human) triumph of the feature length and completely digitized film Final Fantasy. It was not only panned by reviewers but it really riled some folks up to a frenzied pitch. It seemed as if something sacred was being tampered with and they felt somehow cheated. This reaction also fits uncannily well with the history of alchemical practice since alchemists were frequently reviled as charlatans and tricksters—magicians of a kind.

The reason that audiences can identify a 'fake' is because it is an artificial attempt to recreate life (i.e. something that is ostensibly within the realm of god or nature) that leaves a residue or temporal signature (working this out fully is the focus of my current research). Audiences quickly get hip to more sophisticated levels of digital special effects. I think the 'realism' goal is subsiding now. Digital design in film has become a great tool for transforming material reality, although this is an extension of a long history of special effects in film and not necessarily revolutionary in its own right. For instance, the film *Inception*, plunders advancements in digital special effects to create sequences in which inert substances are moved and transformed as if in a dream. This is very interesting in that it connects up well with Jung's seminal work on dreams and alchemical symbolism.

**Not sure what you mean by "animation of inert substances." Can you give us a digital example?**

By this I mean the process of endowing movement or life to substances that are not alive. In a published interview with George Lucas, he explains that they scraped together tape, popsicle sticks, airplane models and all kinds of objects to create their award winning contribution to the history of special effects. He describes how the creation of *Star Wars: A New Hope* frustrated him because it was so low budget. His imaginative vision far exceeded the resources available to realize it. But through the alchemy of transformation, they made a film that did, in fact, fool the eye (largely through camera stunts).

Everyone of my generation remembers the breathtaking opening scene of the gigantic imperial ship chasing the smaller one. . . it just kept going, and going and going. As far as a digital example goes, well we can look at what happened when Lucas integrated digital beings awkwardly and to the profound chagrin of his older fans. Technology can be used in a way that profanes the sacred (as the alchemists were well aware). The example extends to other areas of design such as artificial intelligence, bioengineering, and the like.

**Is alchemy more than a metaphor today? Who are the main practitioners and thought leaders that we should call on for knowledge?**

From studying the works of alchemists such as Paracelsus, I learned that the actual practice of refining a base metal has to be repeated over and over again in different ways using different instruments and catalysts. What was curious is that there always seemed to be a remainder or some type of residue that again, had to be submitted again to further distillations. This connects well to the mythological, symbolic and metaphorical aspects of alchemy as a type of search for the Holy Grail, The Fountain of Youth; a never ending fruitless quest for a constantly receding end point. In today's world, this translates materially into garbage—our version of alchemical residue. The alchemists failed to copy nature because nature can recycle and we cannot. We don't know what to do with the profane material we created since it cannot be subsumed by the earth.

This translates into the symbolic and cultural in the sense that one of the greatest achievements of human beings; the creation of stuff that makes our lives better has also hopelessly inured us in piles of junk. We have no idea how long it will take all that plastic to break down. I would be hopeful that knowledge of alchemy and its particular status as a scientific dead-end ought to teach us to stop cluttering the earth, and outer space for that matter, with our garbage. We need change the way we live as apologetically driven by the laws of consumption to collect more and more stuff. The late George Carlin's joke about life being defined by finding a place for our "stuff" comes to mind here. I do think alchemy is alive today but not obviously in the manner in which it was practiced by the ancients. But alchemical transformation may be more of a warning than a boon. Alchemical transmutation didn't simply disappear, but folks found a way to transmute substances successfully and house it under the appropriate and respectable realms of science, technology, capitalism, and progress.

The way we look at the world by comparing other countries' levels of development to our own is largely driven by who has more stuff. This measure of success and quality of life absolutely has to change if we are to survive as a human race. The fact that the material goal of alchemy essentially failed is a pertinent point even though the history of alchemy is rich and highly misunderstood. Writers and producers of science fiction (filmic and print form) are excellent "thought leaders" of alchemical concepts because they dare to imagine and exaggerate (as is necessary in all storytelling) the

possible future consequences of artificial transformation. There is a well developed debate among scholars that has been going on for decades now about the relative triumphs and disasters wrought by technological development that really can't do justice to here. But the field of technology, engineering and industry and those that practice and write about it are most certainly at the heart of this issue.

**You stated: "Alchemy's explanatory strength lies in its capacity to toggle between the seemingly incongruous realms of practice and metaphor." Can sustainable practices be improved with alchemy?**

Unfortunately, I do not see alchemy as sustainable practice—or at least I haven't thought about it in that way. Alchemy is still inextricably linked to the idea that you can change base metal into gold. The spiritual side to this is that the alchemist becomes a golden man, thus capable of transcending the material plane. This sounds great to me! But people have a hard time thinking of the metaphysical outside of the structure of religious practice—and I don't want to get into all the problems caused by religion and the ways in which it is holding us back as a race. That would entail a very long discussion indeed. Later in this interview I state the possible positive influence of alchemy for society.

**Can you discuss how symbols in the sustainability movement are charged with global meaning through digital alchemy? ["In Paracelsian alchemy, metaphors and symbols refer to concrete practices, and concrete practices refer to psychological realities."]**

One of the reasons that alchemy is often spurned by academics, theorists, or researchers is due to the fact that it claims access to a universal language. The idea that there is such a thing is a big "no no" in vogue in the academy. These symbols include the Sun which represents the male principle and gold, while the moon represents silver and the female principles. There are many more symbols and some are quite complex. Alchemical language offers us a font of useful symbols with which to think through environmental issues.

We shouldn't make stuff that we can't recycle. We probably shouldn't be ceaselessly raping the earth either as learned in the recent oil rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The alchemists adopted a much more ancient and pagan understanding of the sacred and the profane. It is a mistake to think that it was necessarily a Christian worldview that motivated alchemical practice. Nature is the only truly successful alchemist because she creates life that is constantly being recycled—life re-lived and reincarnated. The alchemists always had to deal with the residue or left-overs that remained in the vessel after repeated phases of distillation. So the final word is that there may be a right way and a wrong way to go about manipulating our environment.

**"The promise of instant metamorphosis pervades the material alchemy of yesterday and the spiritual alchemy of today." Please expand on the idea of spiritual alchemy.**

"The spiritual alchemy" of today is my blanket term for the fact that alchemy is alive and well and used mainly metaphorically within many disparate disciplines from business to occult studies. Simply put, I don't think many people are actually trying to turn base metal into gold anymore. The point is that the term has great explanatory power in many contexts and usually refers to a transformation or transcendence of some kind.

**"If the alchemist wants to copy nature, then he must observe the proper times and seasons for carrying out the 'Great Work.'" What is this Great Work?**

The "Great Work" is the moment of simultaneous transformation; base matter becomes gold and the alchemist becomes a transcendent being or "golden man."

**Can alchemy work on a global scale?**

The way I'm developing the idea now it is tending more toward an environmental model that could certainly have implications globally but this is still in an undeveloped stage in my research.

**Can multiple alchemists join forces to create transformation? You speak of manipulating matter."**

Transformations are occurring among teams of people across a wide variety of disciplines which are largely scientific or technological in nature. Again, I doubt that they would identify themselves as “alchemists” per se. The most promising example I came across in my research and which I wrote an article about is within the field of bioengineering. Within the field practitioners try to copy the workings of nature rather than plunder it.

### **Is alchemy an evolutionary catalyst for humans, plants and animals and the Earth?**

Alchemy seems to have developed into a cautionary tale in my work since we have mainly used our alchemical powers to make stuff and destroy the planet with them. Part of me wants to say that forces have been set in motion and it is simply too late. On the other hand, we need (academics included) to start looking at the consequences of the objects or cultural artifacts that we create rather than overemphasizing the social contexts or conditions that brought them about. Once we start the analysis with the end product then we may be able to develop a strategy to stop our obsession with amassing things. In other words, cultural artifacts are not a trivial or marginally important outcome of social processes but rather, in many cases, extremely powerful and frightening consequence of capitalism that deserve attention in their own right.

### **Is EarthDay an example of alchemy?**

I certainly wouldn't dismiss the possibility of organized social action motivated by alchemical metaphors and/or historical lessons.

### **Is vision alchemic?**

No, not by itself. There is a large body of work devoted to visual studies and in part, as with the example of ever increasingly savvy audiences the role of vision does have some play in alchemical studies of digital design. But visual studies also get subsumed under the “everything is socially constructed” theory. The pleasure of seeing is often linked to the pleasure of consuming goods. Many have argued that vision is not just a physiological process but also a sense that changes as society changes. I think I tend to skirt this issue or footnote it in my work because it has been over-studied and historically overemphasized as our most important sense.

**Michelle Ramona Silva**

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## **Bryan Michael, Musician**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1651>

As Michelle Ramona Silva points out in her work, [DIGITAL ALCHEMY: MATTER AND METAMORPHOSIS IN CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL ANIMATION AND INTERFACE DESIGN](#) the digital arts are a fertile ground for exploring the act of creative alchemy. I spoke with [Bryan Michael](#), an artist actively engaged in crafting experiences that cross the boundaries of alchemy and art to get a better understanding of the interstices of sound, image and technology.

**In the interview you did with [Re:Gen Magazine from '07](#) you said that you played at [Matthew Kirscht's art opening in New Orleans](#), did you compose new music for that to accompany the themes of his work?**

No, in fact I was working with a factor of juxtaposition for this particular evening. Kirscht was showing his non-Halloween paintings which dealt with childhood trauma more than anything. Visually it resembled a sort of "Candyland-gone-wrong". Upon first view you received the impression the pieces were quite accessible as he was using very vivid and wonderful colors, but upon closer examination it was apparent the imagery contained much darker elements. So, in a sense my set of off-kilter dance music at the time paralleled that experience.

**Have you had any similar opportunities since then?**

I scored a few gallery showings of friends' work, but these were all done after-the-fact and not conceived simultaneously or analogously with the work being shown.

**What do you look for in a visual artist to accompany your work?**

I would love to work with someone that could create a visual aspect of the music simultaneously during the recording process. Although I think it is possible for this task to be performed separately, the idea of both the visual and musical elements being conceived at the same time seems important. The trick is finding someone that can interpret and translate the tones into viewable elements without them being typical screenplay-style interpretations of the emotions evoked. Someone with a strong synaesthetic sense would be ideal.

**As an electronic artist how is your work enhanced/changed when you are accompanied by a visual display?**

It heightens the experience for the audience and adds a much needed missing element. However, in these cases, there are always moments when the viewer/listener experience becomes divided, whether it be from their own expectations of what should "go" with the music/film or when both elements simply do not gel. Which raises the question, is it possible for a "true" visual interpretation of music?

**Have you ever worked with algorithms that 'play' visuals that are sync'ed up to your music?**

Yes, and again, there always seems to be the moments that don't work and then moments that seem serendipitous. I would love to work with an algorithm that directly translates the rhythmic elements, tonal frequencies and harmonics produced from their various combinations, into the corresponding color spectrum frequencies in real-time. Similar to an oscilloscope but with a full dimensional range of colors in a multidimensional field; a holograph of sorts.

**Is there a difference between something like playing at a gallery exhibition where the images are static and having a moving display?**

Yes and No. At this point, it is left mostly up to the individual as to the experience they are going to obtain. Some can use music solely, or a combination of music with static imagery, to delve within their own mental state and have a more intense experience, as opposed to having the whole thing decided for them with screenplay-style moving images. I think it may be possible to prompt listeners towards a more intense experience by way of color combinations that directly and truly represent the music. How to accurately translate music to image, remains to be seen. Music moves and thus its

visual counterpart should. For so long, the visual arts had been locked in a static medium: canvas, paper, wood, etc. Music has always been about tonal changes through a time dimension, an ever-changing sonic vibrational experience. The musical equivalent of a painting would be a single chord, or say, a one second sound snippet of a fully orchestrated track. I think the early pioneers of film and even TV were privy to this, striving to create a unique experience by morphing and varying visual frequencies on a time plane similar to music. They were not keen to reduce the medium as some method for easily broadcasting theater productions, which is what it has predominantly become.

### **How does the audience's response change?**

Again, it is up to the individual, but environment plays a big factor. For example, in an intimate gallery setting with static imagery, one is less apt to lose themselves, but in a darkened club with pulsating lights that mimic the rhythmic elements of the music, we have a different story.

### **Do you think that the abstract nature of the music requires some sort of visual? An orchestra has the visual element of the players, jazz musicians have a similar level of showmanship, but an electronic composer usually only has a laptop or small set of synthesizers does this necessitate some sort of accompaniment?**

Again, it is largely up to the individual, but in today's culture, I believe most people enjoy the extra stimulus that comes with the visual elements of a live musical scenario. Unless the audience is persuaded to close their eyes and practice some form of mental image formation or meditation, laptop performers have a unique dilemma, as they do not obviously "perform" with their machines. Thinking differently, I have friend Todd Steponick of At Work that is able to pull off a very impressive live laptop show using billboard style props and road signs. I do think many laptop show goers may miss the experience of watching musicians physically interact with their instruments to produce tones, as in an guitar player strumming and plucking strings. I long for a way to see the inner functions of the computer during a laptop set, not merely as translated numerical data, but as a true visualization of the electrical synapses of the machine on a humanly visual level.

### **How does color affect your compositions? I know you mentioned some of your recent compositions sounding like those vintage ritual photos from the 60's/70's, do you find it's easier to compose with a visual in mind?**

Not really. When I'm composing, I'm often approaching the music from a more an emotional level, beyond the visual. Personally, I often find the visual aspect comes after it's finished and I can listen from a different mental state.

### **Do you ever experiment with Pythagorean scales or harmonics?**

Absolutely, and I plan to incorporate more elements such as Gematria into my works. The idea of reducing words and incantations to their numerical equivalency and plugging the data into sequencers for audible results.

### **Bryan Michael**

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## Stephen Geringer - Community Relations, Joseph Campbell Foundation

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**Do you understand what some writers and artists are calling "new mythologies"? What inspirational sources are in their tool kit?**

"The old gods are dead or dying and people everywhere are searching, asking: What is the new mythology to be, the mythology of this earth as of one harmonious being?" - Joseph Campbell Joseph Campbell often pointed out that Western culture is in a mythological free fall. Literal interpretations of the Judeo-Christo-Islamic tradition do not universally match the individual's experience of today: to use another Campbellism, the science of 2000 B.C. does not belong in the world of 2000 A.D. We have no current universal myth that rings true in our experience, so the individual – and the culture-at-large – is adrift on a sea of conflicting beliefs and mythological images. This spiritual chaos is reflected in cultural turmoil and existential angst: violent crimes, drugs, rampant materialism, superficial values, instant gratification, constant overstimulation, and on and on. Hungry ghosts are loose in the land, though just what they hunger for, no one can quite say.

**Into this void steps the artist.**

If the culture is to change its guiding image, then the image-makers, the artists - particularly those with their finger on the pulse of popular culture, the musician-poets, the novelists, the filmmakers, etc. - will play a leading role, their work both reflecting and shaping the public imagination far more than politicians who see ahead only to the next election or businessmen focused on the bottom line.

Joseph Campbell's wife, the noted dancer/choreographer [Jean Erdman](#), once remarked, "The way of the mystic and the way of the artist are related, but the mystic lacks a craft." Joseph believed artists fill the role today once reserved for mystics, seers, and shamans. Like the mystic, an artist brings her or his most inward truth to consciousness. The artist is a master of metaphorical language and the use of symbolism, which are the prime components of myth. In Campbell's words, "it's the work of poets and artists to know what the world-image of today is, and to render it as the old seers did theirs" – particularly in terms of the relevance of that image to our inner life.

**Is Joseph Campbell's work and vision supporting the new myths?**

Absolutely! In Campbell's final lecture, delivered to students at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, he proclaimed, "**In my writing and my thinking and my work I've thought of myself as addressing artists and poets and writers.** The rest of the world can take it or leave it as far as I'm concerned."

Of course, Joseph Campbell didn't believe we can predict the form a new mythology will take, anymore than we can predict what we will dream tonight; nevertheless, he felt certain a new mythology will inevitably emerge out of the morass, noting that "I can see no reason why anyone should suppose that in the future the same motifs already heard will not be sounding still – in new relationships indeed, but ever the same motifs." **His work explores these themes and makes them accessible, but leaves it to the artists (and to individual seekers) to re-imagine the way these relationships play out in the contemporary world.**

What can we expect from an emerging mythology? It should provide a lens through which we perceive the universe, and ourselves. Though differing in details, any new mythology would express the motifs basic to previous mythologies, interpreting them in ways that match our experience of the universe (no hairy thunderer hurling lightning bolts from the peak of Olympus or Sinai – just doesn't jive with "the facts" as we know them).

Perhaps most significant, an emerging "universal" mythology would not necessarily be perceived as "myth," but simply as what is. All earlier mythologies as they developed were recognized as **part of the warp and woof of their culture** – the "what is," who we are, and how we (and everything) came to be. One culture might recognize another culture's myths as myth, but rarely perceives its own as such.

There are many candidates on the horizon, but as to what the final form might be of a coming mythology, no one can say. The one thing Joseph Campbell seemed certain of, though, is that any emerging mythology will need to reflect a vision of the world as one Whole. Earth, when seen from space, has no dotted lines. It's a delicate, fragile system we all share – the air I breathe does not stop at the border. That means we will need to surrender our exclusivity – no more “in-groups” and “out-groups” – we're all in this together.

Clearly, given the current political and religious climate, we have our work cut out for us.

### **Can you offer us some symbols, songs or stories that speak in mythological terms for the Sustainability Age?**

Many come to mind, particularly pre-Columbian myths of the Americas, though the same themes appear in African tales and the song-lines from the Dreamtime of Australia's First Peoples.

In the Lakota tale of White Buffalo Calf Woman, the people are starving for lack of game. Two scouts sent out onto the plains looking for food see a large white buffalo approaching; as the animal nears, it morphs into a beautiful Indian maiden in white buckskin. One of the scouts, his heart filled with lust, seeks instant gratification of his desires (an apt metaphor for today's consumer culture?). The licentious lad reaches out to embrace the girl. A dark cloud envelops them; when the cloud lifts, bleached bones are all that remain of the youth.

The other young brave assumes a reverential posture. White Buffalo Calf Woman instructs him to announce to his people that she will return in four days with a gift for his people and a message from the buffalo nation. The people are to prepare by constructing a large circular meeting lodge to receive her, designed to her specifications.

When White Buffalo Calf Woman returns she unwraps the bundle she carries, which contains the Sacred Pipe of the Lakota. She instructs the people how to hold the pipe, how to light it, how to offer the smoke to Grandfather Sky, Grandmother Earth, and the four directions, and then reveals the essence of the mystery embodied in the pipe:

“With this holy pipe you will walk like a living prayer. With your feet resting upon the earth and the pipe stem reaching into the sky, your body forms a living bridge between the Sacred Beneath and the Sacred Above. Wakan Tanka smiles upon us, because now we are as One: Earth, Sky, all living things, the two-legged, the four-legged, the winged ones, the trees, the grasses. Together with the people, they are all related, one family. The pipe holds them all together. Its stone represents the buffalo, but also the flesh and blood of the red man. The buffalo represents the universe and the four directions, because he stands on four legs, for the four ages of man. The wooden stem stands for all that grows on the earth. Twelve feathers hanging from where the stem joins the bowl are from the spotted eagle, the Great Spirit's messenger. Engraved on the bowl are seven circles of various sizes. They stand for the seven ceremonies you will practice with this pipe, and for the seven sacred campfires of our Lakota nation.”

White Buffalo Calf Woman shows them how to grow and cook corn, what to do with the wild turnip, and how to use every part of the buffalo – meat for food, skins for clothes and tipis, sinews for thread, and bones for tools, and teaches the people the seven sacred ceremonies of the Lakota. As she departs, she rolls in the dust and turns into a black buffalo, then with a second roll becomes a brown buffalo, then one that is red, and finally the most sacred, a white buffalo calf. The moment the people lose sight of her in the distance, a great herd of buffalo appear on the horizon.

The Sacred Pipe of White Buffalo Calf Woman still exists, a living symbol of an ensouled world, keepsake of a sustainable culture.

### **Is sustainability like a religion?**

It certainly can be, but also strikes me as plain common sense.

Still, I can see how critics like political pundit Patrick Buchanan and Senator James Inhofe dismiss it as no more than a fringe belief promoted by fanatical adherents of a Goddess-worshipping cult, a policy that that must be rejected on the grounds of separation of church and state.

**Joseph Campbell might describe that as a literal reading of a mythic image.**

True, a potent mythological image that speaks to sustainability has been resurrected by biologists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulies (first wife of Carl Sagan, a respected research scientist in her own right). Studying the biology and geology of Earth as a series of integrated, interdependent systems working in harmony and following the pattern of a self-regulating organism, they term their theory "the Gaia hypothesis." This doesn't mean they "worship" the ancient Goddess Gaia, but there is a resonance between the ancient conception of Earth as a living Goddess and what we are discovering about the interdependence of life and the mechanisms that regulate the planet. Of course, scientific foundations, academic institutions, and government agencies aren't in the habit of awarding grants to study the role of ancient goddesses in the contemporary universe, even if a metaphor; investigating the workings of "dynamic systems," on the other hand, just seems to cry out for funding.

But one needn't have a vested interest in mythology, or any spiritual belief system, to find value in these fields.

### **What bands or authors stir your imagination these days?**

I would be camped out in a Grateful Dead parking lot if Jerry Garcia were alive – and I still keep track of drummer Mickey Hart's post-Dead incarnations, musical and otherwise (Planet Drum, the Global Drum Project, Rhythm Devils, etc.). Beyond that, I return to jazz and blues standards – Stan Getz, Stephane Grapelli, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, B.B. King.

I read a lot of nonfiction. I look forward to more from **David Abram** ("The Spell of the Sensuous") and Lewis Hyde ("Trickster Makes This World"), and I'm currently reading "Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality" (Christopher Ryan & Cacilda Jethá – intriguing premise, but the jury's still out on that one). Of course, I will never exhaust Carl Jung's Collected Works, and am deeply immersed in his recently published "[Red Book](#)" – a very personal and ultimately successful approach to staying sane inside insanity.

In fiction, I relish the playful creativity of Neil Gaiman ("American Gods"; "Anansi Boys") and the craftsmanship of Michael Chabon ("The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay"; "The Yiddish Policeman's Union"). Cormac McCarthy's crisp writing and twisted imagination bleaches my brain ("Blood Meridian"; "No Country for Old Men"; "The Road"). And recently I've discovered Norwegian writer Sigrid Undset ("Kristin Lavransdatter," a medieval trilogy) and Icelandic author Halldór Laxness ("Independent People"), both winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature (I'm a quarter of the way through "Independent People," and am beginning to believe it is the best-written book I have ever read).

### **Are shaman born or created these days? Any examples?**

Shamans are neither born nor created: they are Called.

A shaman mediates between consensus reality and the spirit world on behalf of his or her people (a female shaman is technically a shamanka, but that term has yet to find its place in English). The shaman travels to the Otherworld in trance facilitated by what [Mircea Eliade](#) terms "archaic techniques of ecstasy" - drumming, dancing, fasting, ingestion of visionary plants (mushrooms, ayahuasca, peyote, ibogaine, cannabis, etc.), and such. In the Spirit World shamans learn to heal the sick, foresee the future, influence the weather and the movement of game animals, and can even cause illness. **The shaman's Calling is a double-edged sword – shamans are respected, but feared, and often live a little apart from the people they serve.** Though the word is Siberian in origin, Eliade designates the ecstatic, inward experience of the shaman a "primary phenomenon" ubiquitous in primal cultures, regardless of where and when they are found.

In most primal societies no one decides to be a shaman when they grow up. The shaman's Call manifests in early adolescence as an illness that triggers a deep psychotic break with consensus reality, often indistinguishable from a schizophrenic episode. This "shamanic crisis" is truly dangerous – not all survive. Another similar yet distinct way the Call sounds appears in North American indigenous cultures where every male is expected to undertake a vision quest during adolescence; a potential shaman is recognized by the nature of the visions he experiences (e.g., perhaps an animal guide identified with shamans in the tribe's mythology).

**But the shamanic crisis is only the first step. Some refuse the Call. Those who do embark on the path are apprenticed to a shaman and receive intense training, often lasting many years.**

Certainly shamans can be found today among the Secoya in the Amazon, the Bwiti of Gabon, the aboriginal peoples of Australia, and other indigenous populations. But there's an argument to be made that shamanism cannot exist apart from primal cultures.

Yet the human brain has changed little the last 12,000 to 15,000 years, and the same patterns that gave birth to shamanism remain in play. It's true that modern society is hardly conducive to the shamanic experience: an adolescent in New York experiencing a break with reality is generally diagnosed as schizophrenic and treated with drugs to suppress the visions, and often even institutionalized. In more "primitive" societies he or she is supported and honored; the psychotic episode is allowed to play itself out, with the result that the individual becomes a respected, contributing member of society.

(Christina Grof, a student of Joseph Campbell at Sarah Lawrence, turned to him for support years later when she found herself overwhelmed with visions and psychic experiences, suffering from an apparent mental breakdown that almost led to her institutionalization; Campbell identified her experience as a "kundalini awakening" common to Eastern cultures and placed her in touch with a colleague, psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, who not only helped but eventually married Christina. Together the Grofs were able to persuade the editors of the DSM-IV – the diagnostic bible of modern psychiatry – to include a **distinction between mental illness and spiritual awakening**. Change comes slowly and the shamanic crisis is still regularly misidentified, but the field of psychology is at least beginning to recognize it as a valid experience.)

So are there legitimate shamans active in the First World today, despite the absence of a traditional tribal path? Well, I don't believe one can decide to become a shaman the way one chooses a vocation: policeman, nurse, construction worker, business executive, or shaman. Nor does simply drinking ayahuasca or ingesting ibogaine a shaman make ... but I have met those who clearly heard the Call, usually as a result of what Joseph Campbell terms a Wasteland experience – a "long, dark night of the Soul" - and have dedicated themselves to this discipline.

It's not an easy path. Whether traditional or contemporary, a shaman is someone who has experienced a deep inward turn, and as a result has developed the tools to move back and forth between this plane of existence and the Spirit World, mediating between the two on an individual's or a community's behalf.

**Despite the temptation to think of this exclusively in metaphorical terms, from what I have witnessed it is a very real, profound experience.** In fact, while pondering this question I touched bases with Keya Hutchens, a good friend who is a shaman based in Minnesota – though she hesitates to call herself that these days, given the "new age" baggage attached to the term. Calm, nurturing, and grounded today, her experience echoes these observations.

Joseph Campbell notes that the difference between a shaman and a priest is that the priest is the agent of a collective order, conveying an established mythological tradition that has descended from others; the shaman, on the other hand, speaks with the authority of his or her own experience. Absent an authentic, living mythology – much like today – the shaman's image can serve as a metaphor for each individual's journey to discover her/his personal mythology, grounded in the experience of one's own inner world, and how that perception is reflected in the world we all share.

For those who wish to [explore shamanism further](#), I recommend anthropologist Jeremy Narby's "The Cosmic Serpent" and the essay anthology, "Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge" (which Narby edited with Francis Huxley), as well as Daniel Pinchbeck's "Breaking Open the Head: A Psychedelic Journey into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism."

**Is alchemy a process that intrigues you? Do you actively use it?**

Actively – yes, albeit more in metaphorical and psychological terms these days.

At one point, a few decades back, while crashing with several other people in bohemian digs (two small, single-story Spanish bungalows sharing a common patio, on a street otherwise populated by clapboard Victorian homes), a friend

and I determined to convert one of the garages into an alchemical laboratory (another case of reading the myth a mite literal ...). However, we were never quite able to pull together all the equipment we needed – the kiln, the alchemical retort, the necessary chemicals, etc. Turned out to be a good thing – we probably would either have blown up the garage or been suspected of operating a meth lab.

Friends at the time assumed our focus was on the end product – physically creating gold – but my understanding of alchemy is that it's the work that transforms – the alchemical opus. It's all about doing the work, not increasing the bank account. The alchemical process is, in essence, a physical ritual that allows one to project an inner state onto physical elements; the dissolution, separation, recombination, and transformation of these materials mirrors one's inner spiritual dynamics, as well as one's relationship to the cosmos as a whole. **Through this transformation of the psyche the alchemist embodies the wisdom inscribed on the legendary Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus – “As Above, so Below; As Below, so Above” – in harmony with the holographic structure of the universe, wherein the Whole is contained in each of its Parts.**

Of course, that's way too simplistic. One can write volumes about alchemy, and many have. The writings of alchemists from Gerhard Dorn to Paracelsus can be obscure, vague, and difficult to fathom for the uninitiated - but we live in a time when there is a wealth of resources available to guide us through this material. Patrick Harpur's "The Philosopher's Secret Fire" is a good place to start (or, for the more playful, **Harpur's novel**, "Mercurius, or the Marriage of Heaven & Earth"). Also of value is "Alchemical Psychology: Old Recipes for Living in a New World," by Thom F. Cavelli. The lengthy chapter on "Phoenix Fire" in Joseph Campbell's "Creative Mythology" (Volume IV of his "Masks of God" series) offers several epiphanies, and then Jung's "Psychology & Alchemy," "Alchemical Studies," and "Mysterium Coniunctionis" (Volumes 13, 14, & 15, respectively, of his Collected Works), are the **Mother Lode**. The slender Chinese volume, "The Secret of the Golden Flower," translated by Richard Wilhelm (known for his edition of the I Ching), with extended commentary by Jung, offers a portal onto parallel processes from a different cultural perspective.

### **Do you understand how alchemy can work in the sound and visual arts? Any examples to share?**

At the risk of sounding like an aging hippie (too late, I know), the live Grateful Dead experience springs to mind – something they never really were able to achieve in the studio. (It doesn't seem coincidence that the company the Dead housed and funded to invent the technology that built their musical instruments and created their sound system is called Alembic – a name taken from the alchemical retort in which the distillation process takes place ... but then the name of the band itself expresses a traditional mythic motif).

Committed Deadheads and the Grateful Dead [used light and sound to evoke a truly transformative experience](#) – a perspective Joseph Campbell and I both share (I was present in the audience at the Kaiser Auditorium in Oakland when Joe and his wife Jean Erdman sat onstage near the band). Keep in mind more than a few concertgoers entered entheogen-induced altered states during shows (Campbell, who never used mind-altering substances - apart from Glenlivet Scotch - compared the event to the ancient Eleusinian mystery rites, where an apparently ergot-laced beverage induced collective trances in participants viewing a ritualized passion play illustrating a descent into the Underworld). In the process of a show the Grateful Dead induced experiences congruent with the operations and states of the alchemical process: e.g., heat, marked by wild Dionysian dance revelry; the nigredo - songs plumbing the darkest depths of the human soul; the albedo – shining light on those dark depths ... and so on. Over the course of four hours or so those present would have their psyches stretched, pulled apart, stirred, shaken, and put back together, ending with what alchemists describe as the "descent of the Spirit" as love suffused everyone's being ... or not.

It was definitely a subjective experience, and by no means universal – but still, a surprisingly consistent pattern for the many.

That taught me that Art is not something to be viewed at arm's length and analyzed, but has to be experienced - felt in my gut, in my heart, and in my soul. Much static art, hanging on the wall, has the power to do this – Rauschenberg, Rothko, Picasso, Pollock, and Klee have that effect on me - but there is an emotional immediacy to sound and movement that breaks past ego barriers ... so yes, I believe I understand how alchemy can work in the sound and visual arts; what's just as clear is that today's technology has definitely upped the ante.

## **Can permaculture be defined in alchemic or mythological terms or processes?**

Yes – I think of the Emerald Tablet, cited above: permaculture requires we be cognizant of the relationship of All Beings in nature – plants, animals, humans, rocks, water, earth – to one another, and to the Whole. In terms of mythology, honoring the needs and requirements of all elements of our environment, and how we shape our surroundings and are shaped by them, is key to multiple mythologies on all continents and in all times.

## **Are you seeing any shifts away from traditional religion to a more Nature-based view?**

I truly hope so. Rather than repeat myself, I'll refer to my earlier remarks about sustainability. Those in favor of the status quo – where it's Man's duty to subdue Nature (and I use "Man" instead of "Humanity" to emphasize the patriarchal perspective) - certainly believe the Nature-based view is a growing threat. And small wonder - maybe it's just the company I keep, but most people I know have gravitated away from traditional dogma to a spirituality grounded in Nature. Over the course of my lifetime the trend is unmistakable.

**This isn't exclusive to pagan, Earth-oriented faiths.** In my hometown of Modesto – the red state/red meat part of California – I belong to a rare CSA cooperative (Community-Shared Agriculture), established by a couple trained through World Hunger Relief, a Christian organization – definitely a step in the right direction.

## **What organizations do you support – that support your growth?**

[The Esalen Institute](#) is at the forefront – not just because of their organic garden and farm next to the ocean, the luxurious massages, and the soothing hot springs perched on the side of the cliff above the Big Sur surf. Esalen is a place to learn, to teach, and to be healed. It strikes me as a clearinghouse of sorts, where I come in contact with a wide variety of very awake people following more-or-less parallel paths. Just this past spring, spending a week as part of the Joseph Campbell Foundation's Mythological ToolBox Playshop, I found myself sharing a hot tub with a younger man there to examine Esalen's water reclamation program, an older gentleman from Eastern Europe practicing somatic healing, and two women – an Episcopalian priest and a Jewish rabbi – in residence for discussions with Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scholars and clerics seeking ways to bypass governments and foster a grassroots approach to peace in the Middle East. Conversation in such settings proves sparkling and transcendent, the information exchange as valuable as time spent in workshop sessions. There I am drawn to step outside myself, expand beyond my own interests, and am inspired by the passions of others.

[The Lantern Projects](#) is a charitable organization I wholeheartedly endorse. Donors are able to designate dollar amounts allotted to specific projects, and know exactly how many desks they are purchasing for a classroom in Ghana, or HIV testing kits in Tanzania, safety visors for landmine removal in Kosovo, iron-top stoves that burn less wood for communities in Guatemala, and so on. I have control over how my money is spent and know who I am helping.

And then, no surprise, there is the [Joseph Campbell Foundation](#) (JCF) – the organization created by his family and charged with preserving, protecting, and perpetuating Campbell's work, ensuring his mythic vision remains available and accessible to the public. It's a labor of love (no one can be in it for the money – there's a reason it's called "nonprofit"). JCF's role isn't to "interpret" Joseph Campbell's words – that's between Joe and each individual – our task is to hold the space.

Part of Joseph Campbell's appeal is that he doesn't tell us what to do, but opens the door to clues hidden in myth that enable each to find one's own way – but what one makes of that is up to the individual.

## **Can you give us your top three global issues that need to be repaired and how you would tackle them?**

Just three?

One is the damage to our planet and the exhaustion of our natural resources (though calling Nature's bounty "resources" could be read as implying ownership, which is not my intent). We have leveled forests, hollowed out

mountains, exterminated countless species, poisoned the water and the air, and upset the balance of Nature ... and we are reaping the inevitable. **I have faith in the Earth's ability to heal herself**, though if we do nothing I doubt restoration will proceed on a human timescale; even if we manage to cooperate and coordinate a worldwide response, I'm afraid global warming and the accompanying climate change are here for the long term. We might mitigate the worst of it, but we've reached a tipping point. Whether we want to or not, humans will have to adapt, or fade away. Absent an environment conducive to human life, all other concerns are moot.

Another global issue is hunger and disease. We have the wealth and resources to feed the planet and alleviate much suffering, but that also requires unity of purpose and concerted action. It's difficult enough in the United States to arrive at a consensus to provide medical care to our own.

And the third issue is human conflict and violence – from suicide bombings in Iraq to drone missile attacks in Pakistan, narco-terrorism in Mexico, and crime in the streets of the United States. I also count religious hatred, racial prejudice, and even hostile partisanship in politics – anything that smacks of what Martin Buber referred to as an “I – It” relationship, or what Joseph Campbell called the “in-group” vs. the “out-group.” Buber notes that what we need is to see in “the Other” not an “It,” but a “Thou.”

And therein lies a clue to what's required to tackle all three of these problems – a change in the collective image of humanity - each of us stepping outside oneself, outside “my” narrow concerns, and seeing the Other as a Thou, whether that Other is someone of another race, another faith, or someone with no resources and an empty belly. We also need see the Thou not just in people, but in Nature: in an animal, a lake, a forest, the sea, or Earth herself. We need to expand our horizons. **We do this by developing compassion.** I'm afraid I don't have a ten point program for how to foster compassion on the planet, but I believe it begins with changing my own perceptions.

But how do we change the perceptions of others?

**First**, through living one's own compassion – recognizing myself in the suffering of others, alleviating my suffering through easing theirs. Given time and commitment, compassion proves contagious.

**Second**, the dominant myth, while still embraced by millions, does not ring true in the experience of many other millions. But we all live our lives in a mythic context, ensconced in story – so we reach others by telling a better story, one that better reflects the world around us.

We do this by turning to the ancient myths, the encapsulated wisdom of generations past, and calling forth the images that ring true in our experience. This is where the artists step into the role of seer and shaman, weaving these elements together to form a new story, one with a different ending.

**New mythologies on the horizon?**

**Stephen Gerringer**  
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## Eric Lindley, Musician and Writer of Careful

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1668>

Oh Light, Eric Lindley's new album as [Careful](#), is a well crafted example of sonic Alchemy. As he explains in his essay for [Indigest Magazine](#) on the process of creating the album, it was a harrowing month of experimentation in his girlfriend's closet that led to the emergence of a unified and beautiful vision through "multiple guitars (plucked and bowed), mbira, flute, punch-card music-box, toy percussion, and hundreds of layers of vocals."

With a background that includes time at Dartmouth College studying under experimental composer and musical theorist [Larry Polansky](#), and at Cal Arts with the minimalist pioneer [James Tenney](#) studying music and cognition, much of his live performance has been focused on creating participatory installation works that use biofeedback to create a direct interaction with the audience. Biofeedback, for Lindley, has become a tool for focusing on the listening experience to better understand composition.

It also changes the way that he experiences music. As Stephen Gerriger, of the Joseph Campbell Foundation, pointed out in his [discussion of myth](#), "'The alchemical process is a physical ritual that projects an inner state onto physical elements.'" Through Biofeedback Lindley is able to tap in to a deeper understanding of how these elements come into play. It gives him a direct look at how the listener is being physically affected by the experience they are having.

The processes that Lindley works with are a good example of the ideas Willi Paul explores with the idea of sound as myth, and the understanding of the '[Sonic – Human Interface](#)'. While building one of the devices he uses in his installation pieces, a friend of Lindley's helped him test the GSR (Galvanic Skin Response) sensor by using it to monitor their meditation. These direct applications show the potential for those willing to explore a wider understanding of the creative process to have a deeper relationship with sound and art

### Has your [experience with biofeedback](#) changed or augmented the way that you compose?

I think so—there are some very direct ways that I've been thinking about integrating [biofeedback](#), or more audience interaction or control, into the more song-like music, where audience members could affect the processing on the voice or instruments live; but I haven't really put much of that into practice yet.

But in other, more subtle ways, I've been thinking about how people actually physically react, and form less literal feedback during performances, where before I think I was more preoccupied with my own, kind of isolated experience on stage, with little bits and pieces of interaction.

Now it's more holistic—the full social interaction that happens in a performance, and how the initial composition can affect that (though structuring songs for more of a traceable, act-like structure that creates a more unified moment for listeners, for instance). But again, I would like to figure out ways to more literally incorporate biofeedback... we'll see.

### Do you think techniques like this can be used by the artist to guide the listener/reader/etc.? Does it change the way you personally listen to music?

Absolutely. I had another project I was thinking about doing, which was kind of like [machine learning](#), where the audience would be hooked up to the GSR ([Galvanic Skin Response](#)) sensor, and the machine would play through passages that had various random patterns of different parameters, all the time reading the audience response. The idea would be that when the machine got a response it wanted, it would go for more sounds that utilized those parameters, and learn what the audience wanted to listen to at any given time.

I guess this is more like the opposite of the technique guiding the listener, but in some ways, as the piece would evolve, and the things the audience wanted would change, the machine would learn what they wanted, and be guided by them. At the same time, it would be instructive to me, ideally, as to how I could structure things to guide particular

audiences.... But yes, in general, I think that regarding these biological processes is huge to understanding how the listener will react, and how to structure things.

For instance, our chemistry just can't change back and forth between certain moods as we may want it to for big, dramatic passages, and research shows that even men and women differ in the rate at which emotions dissipate in their bodies, depending on the particular emotion—so you could even structure music tailored to particular body chemistries.... And this definitely affects how I think about my listening experience with regard to my body chemistry, cognition, and understanding of my place in a larger social structure determined by these processes and musics.

### **In terms of realizing an idea for the composition is there an advantage for the composer in being able to create an instrument (circuit bending, etc.)?**

Definitely. I think that humans react to a lot of different things about music, but a big part of that is a certain [Neophilia](#) (something a mentor of mine, Larry Polansky would talk about a lot). Not everything new is engaging, of course, but oftentimes blatantly "new" things—whether they're completely revolutionary or just new to a particular listener—resonate really directly with an emotion or idea that it can become new and fresh and a symbolic shorthand for this idea. In this way, it becomes, for a short time, a really powerful device. Of course, these symbols eventually become ingrained and stale in music, or simply the object of the symbol becomes less relevant to people, so it's unusable.

That's where new sounds and methods come in, to make another musical shorthand, or "word" for an idea. For instance, trains in [folk songs](#) from eras where trains were new were framed as new, fearful technology, and represented technology as a whole, as well as potentially government control, industrial isolation, etc, but as trains became more and more common, then obsolete, and have eventually become representative of a bygone era, a folksong about a train now speaks more to a kind of romanticized vision of the old west or even a cheap shorthand for the days of yore, rather than the really emotionally resonant thing it once was (though I think there are still wonderful possibilities for revitalizing the train as a symbol, and people are doing that even through twists on folk idioms these days). It's was the same with sounds like the Theremin, or even entire musical styles, like certain types of punk or blues or I suppose anything that was once meaningful.

I feel like, though it's days are numbered, like anything beautiful, [circuit bending](#) became a really powerful way to represent political, anti-consumerist, ad hoc, sincere ideas about modern experience. It's still really powerful, and there are beautiful things that are being done with it, as there are with any new way of using material—and that's what composition is all about: finding new vocabularies to understand and represent experience, and new instruments are a huge part of that.

### **How does your composition change when working with theatre, puppetry, etc.?**

It's a very different process, particularly because it requires me to work with other people. My music tends to be very personal and a little hard for me to get the same depth and risk in my own feelings when I'm tailoring it for collaboration with someone else. Because of that it's been hard for me to find good collaborators, but in the end I have.

But it's a different process, still: I have to be able to articulate what I'm working on in more of a formative stage, and check in with the collaborator to make sure that we're headed in a similar direction. It's helped me think of more large-scale form, but it does really affect a kind of categorization that my music has to fit in if I need to articulate it. I like the process, and it pushes me, but it's definitely different.

### **How closely connected are your compositions to the creation of the puppets?**

That's interesting to think about—I've worked mostly with [Katie Shook](#) doing puppetry/music shows, and I haven't actually seen her create the puppets, but I imagine there's a similar sense of teetering on the edge of suspension of disbelief.

I had another friend remark that, as an animator, a lot of her job was to reinforce the suspension of disbelief, and pull the viewer in as much as possible to the world being created, to actually believe that they are seeing something "real" unfold in front of them, but a lot of the puppetry I've been involved with, though that is important, is often just as much about puncturing those moments by letting the audience in on the illusion, by showing little (or big) cracks.

Katie has a beautiful way of moving her [puppets](#), which is very magical and fluid and strange, and the puppets and environments are cleverly and meaningfully constructed. However, though I'm not sure we've talked about it, I think we share the feeling that in order to get certain ideas across, you have to break the illusion at some points, in a kind of Brechtian, alienating way.

I think my animator friend feels the same way, but she does it in different, stylistic ways, rather than directly letting the illusion fall and rise at key points—and of course, I don't feel like either approach is inherent to animation or puppetry, but more something that these particular people are pursuing.

### **Is collaborating across disciplines similar to playing with other musicians?**

I think so. There's more translation necessary, and the cultures and concerns are often very different across disciplines, as I've mentioned a little bit above, but ultimately it's been more freeing for me to work with other non-musicians, because it means there's a big field of "Music" for me to work in, where I can control the entire world of sound.

When you're working with other musicians, you have to be more aware of your socio-musical niche in the soundscape, so while it can be very productive and very fun, I love the feeling of an open field that can be in dialog with the visual or narrative aspects of what other people are doing, rather than being somewhat confined by immediate stylistic tendencies of other musicians.

Of course, I love working with other musicians as well, but the initial sniffing-out of similarities and inclinations sets up more confined roles.

### **How does your experience across disciplines affect your focus during composition?**

I think a lot more about musical metaphors for visual ideas, or for narrative flow in music, or for dramatic arc, for physical-visceral experience, or even ways that a song can be shaped like a meal or a particularly delicious dish of food.

It sounds a little disingenuous and even cliché to say that, I think, but I also really believe that everyone is really working with the same constraints of human perception, cognition, body chemistry, and social/national roles, with minor differences between how the information actually gets there: through the ears, mouth, nose, skin, or eyes.

Of course, there's a big difference between time-based art like a play or a song, where you would have to devote an inhuman amount of attention to each millisecond of information to "see" it all, and something like painting, where you can basically look at every inch of the painting, and back up, and feel like you "see" it—though, I have to admit that saying that may just reveal some of my ignorance about static visual art, which though I love and have tried to do, I don't really consider myself an artist in that way.

### **How do you view the artist's position in society? What is the role of the artist for you?**

I've been thinking about this a lot recently. Right now I'm up at a residency with a bunch of artists in different disciplines, and it's amazing to see the diversity, but it's also interesting to see that we're all more or less scraping by, either living off our art, or getting supplemental teaching jobs.

I think that there are a lot of different artists, and that all of their roles are valuable, from people like [Matthew Barney](#), who do incredibly beautiful things with inconceivable amounts of money—something I am completely in awe of, and would never want him to stop, because it reveals things to me about my own ways of thinking and feeling that are important to me, but also seems horrifying in a world where (I don't know where his studio is), but there are probably

people who are destitute that pass just feet away from its walls—to the little communities of artists I met in grad school—who make beautiful things for fairly small communities, even just for themselves, and have teaching and other types of jobs—to commercial artists like Thomas Kinkade—who, if I am really honest, I think of as more of a businessman, but assert that his art makes a lot of people very happy, even if I suspect that it's more the happiness of acquisition than of art-appreciation.

So, there are a lot of roles, way more than I've mentioned, and I think they're all valid, but personally I'm at a point in my life where I love what I do artwise, and I feel like I am making some amount of difference, but I'm extremely conflicted when I think that—and I know this to be the roughly the amount—I could send a child to four years of high school in Malawi, essentially changing the course of their life for the better (though of course that's debatable) for the price of a single guitar.

### **Has literature affected the way you look at music? How integrated is your approach across disciplines?**

Absolutely—I mentioned this before, but I think about narrative arc and different kinds of metaphor in more depth because of literature—and because of some of my linguistics study. I was actually talking about this with my partner, Heather, who is a writer, the other day: we were talking about what is and isn't permissible in writing versus music (more on this below), and what is and isn't possible, but I think that with music you can really accelerate dramatic moments because of the kind of ineffable shorthand of certain musical conventions, or musical innovations that just make sense, and bypass rational judgment in a way that writing can't always do, or takes longer to do.

That is, you can set up a beat in music really quickly, or strings can swell, or a wall of glitched-out noise can just come out of the speakers, and you'll need a couple seconds to get your bearing, but you can follow it pretty quickly, but it takes a bit more time to understand the voice of the prose or the logic of the poetics that a writer is using. I think that my approach is very integrated across disciplines, but it takes things like this into account, and like I said before, also makes me think about how I can take the effect or properties of one discipline and carry it over into another.

### **Do you ever use William S, Burroughs' cut up techniques? Or the alchemical techniques he outlines in *Electronic Revolution*?**

I actually haven't, and I haven't read [Electronic Revolution](#), but I'm interested in the process. Writing words is an extremely sensitive process for me, because it teeters on a very delicate edge. Whereas I feel you can write a lot of things on the page and not come off as pretentious, and you can try a lot of strange, cut-up or stream-of-consciousness, or other techniques that mirror cognition or experience in writing or in sound-art, when it comes to songs, the setting for most is not such that those things come off naturally or enjoyably (at least not yet, in my hands—I'm willing to bet that people out there are doing and have done brilliant, beautiful things that I just haven't seen yet).

### **Do you think artists can affect social change through their creativity? If so, does cross discipline collaboration aid in this?**

I do—and though I did mention that I'm a little bit wary or self-critical when trying to measure my impact in the world for the better versus the amount of resources I take up and the amount of enjoyment I get out of the world by making music and art and doing other things that I enjoy, I really do think art can "change hearts and minds" in a very positive—emphatically non-propagandist—way.

There are those artists who have a kind of "brand" that is political, but don't do a lot to actually change the political landscape for the better or help anyone but themselves get more money, and there are also those artists who revolutionize ideas and in so doing ripple through and cause major paradigm changes in the way people think that change the social world for the better, as well as artists who happen to be political, and do a lot of good in both areas.

Ultimately, though, I do think there are some tricky aspects, though not a conflict, between art and politics. I've heard people say that they can't mix, because (and I think this is half-true) art is less direct, more personal, and addresses things on a level that is simply incompatible with political effort, which must be blunt and mechanistic to be effective.

However, I feel like a lot of people, including both overtly political artists like U2 or [Guy Debord](#), as well as self-described "non-political" artists like [John Cage](#) have done a lot to integrate their artistic and political lives and goals.

**What are the idea seeds that you enjoy working with? Do the themes that shape your electronic publication [\[out of nothing\]](#) come into your music as well?**

I think with songs or short dramatic or written pieces I like working with little ideas, like palindromes, or playful/meaningful uses of the words "some" or "might", but with larger form work, like a full album, or a novel (which I'm working on right now for the first time), I like using big ideas, like different examples of uneven power dynamics on small-to-large scales, or the tensions between practical decision-making versus reification of ideas or objects... Really, anything that strikes a chord and makes me excited to work.

[out of nothing] is an interesting project, because I feel like it integrates a lot of my interests, as well as the interests of the other editors, [Janice Lee](#) and [Joe Milazzo](#), but it's more of a curation, and so depends largely on the work that is submitted. Of course we get a lot of amazing things, and we pick someone we respect in the field to frame each issue, but beyond planting the initial seed, which we editors do in really fun, excited conversations before each issue, it is really left up to fate what's going to happen.

But absolutely, especially the conflicted ideas I have about reification, as well as my love for effusive, messy, beautiful things framed in humorous, somewhat abject ways, is a real running theme through [out of nothing]—which informed the title, which was taken from one of my writing pieces—as well as my music.

### **Eric Lindley's Bio:**

The mastermind behind New York City's Careful is sleepy-eyed polymath Eric Lindley.

Though he is a published writer, orchestral composer, visual artist, and part time builder-of-robots, his first and fiercest love is making a blend of intimate songwriting, esoteric theory, and delicate electronics.

Lindley self-produced Oh Light, his second full length effort, recording and mixing the album over the course of a month in a closet in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood. Oh Light is being released by Sounds Super Recordings, it is also available as a digital release.

### **Eric Lindley**

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

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

[Eric Lindley on Myspace Music](#)

## Mike Williams, Shaman Expert and Author

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1672>

### Introduction by David Metcalfe

Mythology is built with material gathered from the experiential world. In the same way that artists train their eye to mind the subtle lines and their hands to translate that vision into a painting or sculpture, mythic stories are told by those who have trained their eyes to see the subtle lines of reality and who have developed the means to bring those stories into the daily acts that they perform.

The role of the pilgrim, as described by [Baba Rampuri](#) is to **bring back blessings from their journey**. In the same way to **Follow the Shaman's Call**, as described in Dr. Mike Williams book of the same name, is to journey into the cauldron of the world's creation and mediate between the world we see and the world of things we rarely glimpse.

**Myths are brought alive through the shaman and brought into the culture as active forces that can challenge and change society.**

Community development is at the core of this vision. Relationships established by envisioning the world through myth help create a conversation with the environment. Dr. Williams has used his study of archaeology to develop an understanding for the techniques and rituals that allowed people in the past to develop these relationships.

For Dr. Williams the shaman's role is deeply connected to the health of the society. Our present situation would be much different if we all felt the world's ills "at an instinctual and almost somatic level," as he describes the shaman's understanding of the problems of the world.

### Is it possible that we can retrain ourselves for this vision?

The [[open myth source](#)] source project brings together conversations, symbols, songs, visual art and stories to act as a catalyst for this process. We agree with Dr. Williams, in a world stricken with fear and confusion, "The drive to end suffering is paramount." It's time to sing again the songs that bring us together, that bring us a vision of where we come from, where we are and what lies ahead.

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### Interview with Mike Williams by Willi Paul -

#### Is this (yet another) prehistory on the Planet, or what I call the Sustainability Age?

We often look back at the prehistoric past as a time when people were more in tune with the natural world and took account of sustainability in their everyday lives. This was not always true, however, and as soon as they were capable of doing so, humans began to exploit the natural world with no thought of sustainable use. Mega-fauna went extinct, shellfish were decimated on remote islands, and, with the move to farming, huge areas of forest were cleared.

Some people realized what was happening and, in historical times, there is evidence of almost visionary solutions to environmental problems. The people of Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, invented the bird-man races as an answer to environmental degradation of their island, and some Maori people set aside reserves on their island home of New Zealand, where hunting was restricted.

I think these answers presented themselves in part because of people's connection with the spirit world and a recognition of forces larger than themselves. This is what seems to be happening today in what you refer to as the Sustainability Age. People are recognizing that the future of the planet is influenced by the actions of each one of us. Coupled with a burgeoning interest in earth-based spirituality, perhaps we are beginning to see the world as some of our

more enlightened ancestors did. It remains to be seen which aspect of the past finally emerges: the continuing degradation of the natural world or its meaningful conservation.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion?**

I make a distinction between spirituality, which is a personal relationship an individual has with forces larger than themselves (some might think of these as deities), and religion, which has traditionally been about following rules and, increasingly, dogma.

If sustainability becomes a religion, then such dogma might overtake it and, where you have dogma, you also have rebellion. We are seeing something of this with people increasingly turning their backs on the scientific evidence for artificial climate change. With spirituality, there is less rebellion since the experience is personal and not institutionalized. I would encourage everyone to enter into their own relationship with the natural world and see Mother Nature as a sacred being. It is far more difficult to misuse and destroy something we hold as sacred.

### **Do you consider rock musicians as shamans?**

Now that would depend on the definition of a shaman! I think that any creative force, either making music, art, or writing, is an invocation of forces larger than ourselves. Many creative people feel that they merely channel what they create rather than it originating purely inside of themselves.

For performance art, such as rock or, indeed, any form of live music, there is a connection formed between artist and audience that transcends individuality. In a way, the audience give their souls to the performer and it is only when the music ends, in that moment of stillness before the applause, that their souls return and individual personalities are born anew. In this way, the experience of a concert is akin to a shamanic journey and, as overseer of that journey, perhaps the musician becomes a shaman.

### **Are modern shaman's helping to create new mythologies? If so, can you give us some examples?**

There are some who doubt that it is possible to follow shamanism in our modern world since we are so far removed from a traditional earth-based lifestyle. I find this view extremely limiting. We know that shamanism is a technique that can be utilized by everyone; if nothing else, neurobiology tells us that. Not everyone will become a shaman as a result of practicing shamanism but the techniques are available to all.

The spread of shamanism in the Western world can be compared to the spread of Buddhism. Every place touched by Buddhism has shaped its own distinct practice and tradition that, whilst still following the basic tenets of Buddha's teachings, has given the religion a new form. The same is true of shamanism and it will be interesting to see how the practice develops and changes in our modern world.

Already, we have new mythologies developing from shamanic spirituality that appear entirely modern. We instinctively accept, for example, that companies have souls that can go bad, they have power animals (think of the logos of many major companies that are animals), and many seem to have a disembodied will that is beyond any single individual within the organization. We instinctively use ancient systems of thought, such as shamanism, to explain our entirely modern world.

### **How the practice of shamanism fit into the following organizations (if at all):**

- 1. Masons**
- 2. Catholic Church**
- 3. Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids**

Shamanism is a technique for accessing alternative realities and interacting with the spirits that reside there. In this sense, all and any religion or spiritual institution might incorporate elements of shamanism, including those in the

question. Of course, organized religion tends to discourage personal interaction with God or the spirits, arguing that a priest or other intermediary needs to act as a go-between, but many people who follow those religions still have personal experiences of drawing close to their idea of divinity. This is not surprising since, as I commented earlier, the practice of shamanism is available to all.

For myself, I am closely involved with the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids and, whilst shamanism is not overtly part of the taught course, it is clear that many of the practices could be regarded as shamanic.

**Do you believe in a God? If so, please describe this process and benefit.**

I find it difficult to conceive of a God in the Judeo-Christian sense, with an omnipotent and all-knowing figure overseeing my every deed, presumably allowing bad as well as good to befall me. Whilst I do not discount that there may indeed be a universal creator God, I see deity as a spiritual force that I can approach and interact with and, occasionally, perhaps even influence through my shamanic work.

Certainly, in the past, people had an almost contractual relationship with the Gods and there is evidence of shrines being utterly destroyed, presumably after these Gods had proved particularly capricious. Similarly, I feel that the spirits, unlike a beneficent but arguably useless God (bad things do happen), are capricious or, rather, are less concerned with individual lives. Shamanism is a means of making ourselves a little more visible to them and, in my experience, they can, and regularly do, show compassion towards us as a result.

**By fusing your archaeological and shamanic perspectives, what are the possible benefits of the new alchemy?**

My research suggests that people in the past followed a shamanic lifestyle and this is what I try to bring through in the new alchemy, as you so eloquently put it.

Seeing the world as inherently sacred, and with spirits that can be approached and interacted with, makes it far more difficult to harm the planet in a deliberate or unthinking manner. I still live a modern life and I am aware that my actions have an unavoidably negative consequence to the earth but I also see it as my responsibility to account for these actions and to make sure that some degree of equanimity is retained. Shamanism is about walking in balance, between this world and the other world, and between our negative and our positive influences on the world.

If we are to move towards a sustainable future, I believe that it has to include a discernment of the sacred in all things but especially the natural world, and shamanism can help us achieve this.

**Are your power animal and spirit guides the same as mine? Why is this rite or awakening different for each person?**

Spirit is formless. When we approach spirit, we approach something that we cannot see with our normal eyes. Shamans enter a state of non-ordinary reality when they journey to the otherworld in shamanic trance, and it is only then that spirit becomes visible. Scientists call these visions of the spirits 'hallucinations' and they are correct to a point. Since spirit is formless, when we meet spirit in non-ordinary reality, our brain makes sense of what is before us by cloaking it in familiar imagery. For many people, spirit first appears as an animal. Scientists explain this by commenting that animals are the most common form of hallucination, whilst shamans speak of having found their power animal. The two approaches, whilst situated in their own distinct paradigms, are remarkably similar.

The form of animal that my mind gives to spirit may be different to yours (and it may be that spirit has an influence on exactly what animal we see), but we are still relating to the same formless spirit. Similarly, we may continue to break spirit down into further animal helpers or even human guides. There really is no limit.

This is also why there is no universal pantheon of shamanic Gods or spirits, since each individual will formulate their own. Meeting spirit for the first time is a rite of awakening that we can only go through ourselves.

**Where and what is the common well or interface for the shamanic powers you know?**

The common well for all shamanic power is undoubtedly spirit. How we utilize that power, however, is down to our individual inclination and experience. There is an almost universal acceptance that a traditional shaman must have suffered in order to access the power of spirit. In our modern world, suffering can take many forms but most of us will have passed through dark periods in our lives. It is from understanding and accepting our suffering that compassion arises, firstly for ourselves and then, by extending our understanding of such suffering, outwards towards others.

Spirit seems moved by the manifestation of human compassion and lends its aid to our healing or other tasks. In this way, the shaman never heals but just acts as a conduit for the power of spirit to flow. But this is only possible through the initial intervention of the shaman and the strength of compassion that he or she brings to the situation. It is a symbiotic relationship.

To a shaman, there is no division between self and other. Where one person suffers, so all people suffer. The shaman feels this at an instinctual and almost somatic level. The drive to end suffering is paramount.

**Please review [my research on shamans](#) and offer your comments.**

To me, a shaman is one who can enter alternative realities, interacts with the spirits that reside there, and then uses the power this gives him or her to serve the community. Service is key to shamanism and this is reflected in the comments on your site, with its emphasis on serving the earth and all its inhabitants through sustainability.

Few people in the West call themselves shamans – it is something I would never do – since we have lost the direct connection to serving our communities in the way that shamans in traditional societies would do. Perhaps this will come with time or perhaps we will need to think on a much larger scale and our service will be to the entire planet and the sustainable future of all life.

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### **Mike Williams Biography -**

Looking back, I cannot recall when my love of prehistory began. I was obsessive about the past and ever since I can remember, the ancient world filled me with wonder. Here were people who lived thousands of years ago but left remains that I could visit, literally walking in their footsteps. Shamanism has always been a part of me too. The inner realms that only I could access were as real to me as anything else in the world. I believe that all children are born like this; it is only later that our innate abilities are squashed and we forget what was once quite natural. As I got older, I wanted to know more about those who lived in the past: I wanted to know what these people talked about, what they thought, and, most of all, what they believed in. Did they worship Gods? Did they speak to spirits? Did they look at the stars and wish they could touch them? I was a child for whom the supernatural was near enough to touch and, at some level, I knew that those who had lived in the past felt the same.

My childlike enthusiasm for the past never waned and my early career as a chartered surveyor and developer left me more often looking into a hole to see what I could find rather than filling it with concrete to see what I could construct. In between, I sought out stone circles, burial mounds, and all the wonders that punctuate our land. Pretty soon, my love of these mysteries took over I resigned from my job and returned to University to study full time. I took an MA and then a PhD at the University of Reading, studying under Professor Richard Bradley. My thesis explored the ancient beliefs of our European past: the shamanic practice of our ancestors. The child really did birth the man.

Whilst at Reading University, my academic papers included explaining the Iron Age bog bodies, an exploration of trance imagery on Celtic coins, and the agricultural cycle as a metaphor for prehistoric belief. I also presented at national and international conferences on all aspects of prehistoric belief and shamanism.

Of course, whilst I was a serious academic I kept quiet about my training with the [Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids](#) (OBOD), the largest modern Druid order in the world. Stating that I was an initiated Druid did not strike me as sitting comfortably in the world of ivory towers. As I followed their training through all three grades, however, I felt as if it had

been written just for me, so close did it mould around my being. Perhaps it was natural that I have now become a tutor for the Bard and Ovate grades, helping others find their feet on a path that still means so much to me.

To set the shamanism of our ancestors into context, I researched many modern shamanic communities from around the world. This provided essential background for my PhD but also allowed me to explore different shamanic traditions. Those that called to me strongest were, perhaps unsurprisingly, of northern Eurasia: the Sámi of Lapland and the many groups that populate Siberia. I found that the traditions of these people stretch back, almost unbroken, to the time I was studying. All of a sudden, the mute remains of the past found a voice. I had the good fortune to travel through Lapland and Siberia and to work under some modern shamans. I also studied core shamanism and attended myriad training courses and workshops wherever and whenever I could. I learnt how to heal illness through extracting the spirit of the affliction, and I learnt how to restore souls to those who had lost them through trauma. Eventually, my own shamanic practice formed. I also began to write books from both an archaeological and shamanic perspective. In truth, however, they are really two sides to the same coin: my archaeology books set out the evidence for prehistoric shamanism and how it affected people's lives, and my shamanic books show how we can still follow this path today, drawing on the wisdom of our ancient forbears.

My latest books are [Follow the Shaman's Call: An Ancient Path for Modern Lives](#), published by Llewellyn Worldwide which is a practical guide to ancient European shamanism and won a silver medal at this year's IPPY awards in New York. [Prehistoric Belief: Shamans, Trance and the Afterlife](#), is an in-depth look at prehistoric shamanism has just been published by The History Press.

I have found a home tucked into a secluded valley in Wales, which I share with my wife and various animals.

**Mike Williams**

[PrehistoricShamanism.com](http://PrehistoricShamanism.com)

## Gaia Orion, Toronto Painter / Writer

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1678>

### Introduction by Gaia Orion –

When I was a kid there was an old lithography at my grandparent's castle in the washroom. It was about life and its different stages. Steps were going up to the age of 50 - Age Of Discretion it said – and then the steps were going down to the Age Of Decay (90 years old). A couple was shown on the steps at various stages of their life cycle and at the end the old couple, at 100 years old were lying in bed in the Age of Infancy and Imbecility! A Last Judgment picture was right in the center depicting in detail heaven and hell with details ... Looking at this picture growing up was amusing but also daunting. I thought that there must be a different way to see this life journey.

Today I see life as seasons passing and returning. There are stages of maturity and gaining wisdom along the way; though a 100 year old can feel like a child at heart and the natural wisdom of a child is pure and powerful like the old sage. The natural slowing down of the body as we age gives us opportunity to slow down in our activities and have more time for reflection. Just like winter is telling us to rest and look inward every year. When one lives in tune with nature life is a cycle following the seasons.

**Where does it really start? When does it end? When the caterpillar 'dies', it has no idea that it is initiating the birth of a beautiful butterfly.**

We know through the studies of ancient civilizations that all religions & cultures have the same core. Focusing on this universal theme of human life is what brings us together; it enables us to be compassionate when we don't feel connected. It is only through working on our own life journey that we can participate to the whole in a constructive and integrate manner. When we work seriously and passionately on finding peace and wisdom, the rest unfolds naturally toward a greater community around us and around the world. I thought this would highlight your point on Myths that highlight the collective journey.

**To write the new myths in the Sustainability Age, we need to consider several key principles from our mythological and alchemical heritage:**

**I. OUR JOURNEY** - Myths highlight the collective journey. Coalitions, the community meetings and marches are what Joseph Campbell might have called the journey. Now we are all on the EJ journey together.

**II. MOTHER NATURE** - unified races/people, all on the same spiritual journey and search for meaning. Alter Eco Fair Trade Company presents a new way of doing business, of exchanging goods. They are proving that an economy based on integrity and good ethic can be prosperous and can work. It is working and it is also presenting viable, long term solutions where fewer disparities can be present between countries and people, land can be used by people in a sustainable manner. Right now the Western world system is not a long term solution. We are all sitting on the edge, we know it, enough is being said about that, enough studies and scientist have told us that our seas, our land, our food and our bodies are polluted, that most species are endangered, that the ice caps and glaciers are melting, that the weather patterns are changing.

I believe we have all the solutions in our hands, things can change fast. A black president was elected in United States because people united together; this gives us courage and incentive to unite again for all the changes that are needed. I see internet as a wonderful uniting tool for all the people of the planet, the young generation that meet and share through Facebook doesn't think in flags and boundaries anymore. That's very encouraging to see. There is a lot to be despairing about but there are also so many things to get excited about. I think this is a very interesting time to be alive. The power of Mythology is also about shared initiations: educating and growing, seeking and returning to educate.

**III. FREE!** We all look up to masters, artists, musicians writers, philosophers, but what we regard in them the most is their freedom from conditioning, from the masses, they bring new images, sounds, ideas, stories to the world. In that

they express freedom, they had to go against the status quo; they had to question the teachers, the parents, the religious figures. Each one of us can do the same, be an example of that freedom and from that transform others by simply following the path of letting go and discovering new paradigms. We need more Heroes, but not just adults with advanced degrees from the West, but kids and grandparents from all over!

For a great set of stories and heroes with mythic vision, journey to the [My Hero Project](#).

## **I HAVE A DREAM.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Interview with Artist Gaia Orion by Willi Paul**

#### **How are you creating new stories and myths in your paintings?**

Sacred and ancient forms of art from various cultures throughout history have always fascinated me. With beauty in their simplicity, their strong lines, vivid colours, and **images transcend time**; though feel like 'they have always been here.' A lot of research has been done showing that around the world and throughout our history common core concepts and archetypes link us all.

I feel my artwork is connected to this ageless thread. So yes, in one sense I am creating 'new' myths, 'new' stories for the society I live in and for our modern time... though these myths and stories have a **timeless, archetypal foundation**.

#### **Tell us yours fears and hopes for your kids.**

It is difficult not to think sometimes about how unstable and volatile our world is. For instance, we depend a lot on our technology for everything in our lives at so many levels, from the food we eat to the ability of promoting my artwork through internet. As our world becomes more and more complex and separate from naturally sustaining ecosystems there is a real possibility that the illusory flow of information and goods could be disrupted.

I am truly grateful for our abundance and that we can provide so much for our kids when throughout history (and even in much of the world today) most generations would go through phases of famine, disease and war. As long as we are not working seriously at a planetary level to resolve basic issues (like our growing world population, the ridiculous gaps between rich and poor, the racism and hate that feeds political agendas for wars, the pollution that is destroying our resources and our bodies little by little... to name a few!) then we are living on a very thin comfort blanket right now. It is sad to witness that and sad for my kids to grow up with the slogan "save the planet" at every corner of their life. Despite these grave problems we have no choice but to remain optimistic.

When I saw Barak Obama being elected it gave me hope to think that we do have all the solutions in our hands and that change can happen very quickly. I read on one of your interviews that ¼ of the money spent worldwide on armaments could resolve most of the basic issues I mentioned. That is a great thing to know but we need the resolve as a species to take a step and put our money and resources to constructive use. Everywhere I see small community initiatives, green businesses growing exponentially and many new ideas that bring viable solutions. At one point the old paradigm will shift and new sustainable ways of living on the planet will be everywhere. That is so exciting. I often say that if I had to choose to live at any point of history, this would be an amazing time to be alive. I know I am raising kids that are very aware, conscious and understanding. I have no doubt that they are a great addition to our future society!

#### **Artists may go through many initiations on their alchemic journey. Please us about some of your key learning's and transitions.**

Our 'sensory apparatus' picks up only a thin, minute band of energy, thus information, out of the total available from the entire spectrum. This leaves an incredible amount 'unseen' to our senses. Being on an alchemic journey is to get an

understanding of that fact as we experience different levels of reality. Some call it having mystical experiences but if you understand the physics and the meditative insights it is simply being sensitive and opening ourselves to new realms.

When I was 12 I used the [Weegie Board](#) with friends and it basically traumatized me for years. What scared me was the possibility that there were other beings around me that I couldn't see and I was worried of their possible power over me. Nobody around me took my fears seriously so I was left alone with this changed view of life. I was mostly left with many questions, doubt about the religion I was brought up with (Catholicism), and doubt about adults that had no explanations for me and showed no support. An irrational fear of the unknown stayed with me for years.

When I was 21 I met my husband Dolphin while traveling in Morocco. Our meeting was quite magical and it felt that bigger forces had been at work to make us meet. On our wedding night, we were alone on the beach in France and we were holding hands facing each other when giant auras glowed around us for the longest time. After this happened 'channels' opened and I was able to see auras everywhere and I was also realizing that being in touch with other realms was not all about fears. It was very beautiful and peaceful.

At 28 I started meditation retreats and there I was able to experience the subtleties and possibilities of the mind (and the universe) just by sitting still on a cushion. In the last 10 years I have learned different healing techniques and have read many books on science, health, diet, healing, sacred geometry, philosophy and spirituality which have been key in many transitional moments.

My **alchemic journey** is about seeing the opening of my perception of reality and the inner psycho-spiritual transformation that is reflected in my relationships and the unfolding of my life. When life is giving me difficult situations I am able to embrace the challenge and be grateful for what I will be learning through this. Everything is in place for a reason; it is magical to see the intricacies of life and how everything is connected so magically in a perfect dance.

### **Are you an "island of creativity and rebellion?" And how do you build community?**

Creativity arises naturally. It is not something that I can call anytime. It is a gift that comes in once in a while. I realized that what is important is to set the ground for creativity to be able to flourish. This is a daily work on myself to arrange my life so that it has some space for creativity to happen. Creativity cannot come if I am too busy with entertainment, activities and other things.

Rebellion is inevitable in this world if we are looking for a life that has meaning. The world of the mainstream is full of half truths and superficiality. It takes a lot of energy to inquire, to see through the film of conformism. Most people don't want to disturb or be disturbed; it may seem a lot easier to go along like everyone with what we are being taught and told by our families, religions, politics, schools and society. Only a few will go against the status quo. For them it is not even courage or rebellion it is just the only way to live to keep their spirit alive. When you are on that path of searching for truth and balance you inevitably connect with others that are on the same search and it has been this way for thousands of years. Artists, writers, musicians, poets, philosophers, spiritual seekers and also some visionary political leaders have led the way. Their example and message filters out, inspires all individuals and slowly helps in the building of community.

### **Is there a "Father Nature?" How is this energy expressed in your work and in popular culture these days?**

I would say that Nature embraces both Father and Mother. There are archetypes that are obvious: Mother Nature is the earth as she is hosting us, feeding us, nurturing us like a mother. Other energies in this world are more masculine like the Sun. The Sun has the energy of protection, power, and strength as it gives heat and life to our bodies. I try to embrace both energies in my work, but I do have to admit that my work mostly focus' on female energies. I think it is probably because we need more of it in our world. Our western society is based on a patriarchal model; it is hard to believe that women were only allowed to vote in 1944 in France and that Saudi Arabia still doesn't allow women to vote. I feel one of the reasons why our environment is so destroyed is because of this imbalance and disconnection to Mother Earth. Western world religion - mostly Christianity - has a history of domination over other religions and people; its father god is in the sky disconnected from natural elements and it has male dominated sacred texts and hierarchy. All of

this has definitely played a part in the environmental issues we have today and the way our society views the resources of the planet.

### **What is the spiritual core or principles of the Sustainability Age? Is there a universal theme or spark still?**

I kind of smile when I hear all these "new" concepts of sustainability, buying local, respect of the environment, recycling, reusing etc. because most of humanity throughout history was living that way naturally. There was no such thing as creating garbage, recycling was not even a concept but an obvious thing to do, buying local was the only place to buy food, respecting our environment was absolutely necessary for survival. Something went wrong not so long ago when we thought that we were the most intelligent species and that being in harmony with nature became a fluffy, new age, pagan, tree-hugger thing to talk about!

When we look at nature, feel the peace and harmony that exists within the forest we automatically know the truth. Now go downtown in a large city: thick concrete and asphalt under our feet disconnect us from the earth and heavy smog and light pollution makes it impossible for us to see the skies and stars; we know intrinsically what it is to live the right way... but we don't! No religion can dictate what is right or wrong. Only by observing nature can we learn about physics, science, economy, ecology, even mathematics and spirituality. Nature is the only universal theme that connects us all and that holds the answers to our present problems.

### **Please explain this more deeply: "When we work seriously and passionately on finding peace and wisdom, the rest unfolds naturally toward a greater community around us and around the world."**

From meeting people that had a similar journey as well as from my own experience, I know that when we let go of the old beliefs, step out of society's expectations and search for truth and meaning, then there is magic that happens: synchronicities occur; the world seems to organize itself around us so that we can navigate through it. Even though there are little choices to make everything seems to be presenting itself the way it should be. Because the core intention was pure and from the heart, all that unfolds is naturally for the good of all. With each person doing this it inspires more people to make a positive change.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion?**

Sustainability is what should naturally arise and be if we choose to live in 'harmony with ourselves and with nature'. There is no need to talk in terms of religion. If we felt inner fulfillment in our lives then we wouldn't need to buy so much stuff. Our addiction to buying, endlessly making our houses nicer and more comfortable - which is really our desires uncontrolled - is what causes so much destruction ecologically. This whole ecological shift has to come with personal understanding and change. We know that people will change if they inquire seriously into life.

### **Is Toronto a magical place?**

Toronto is known to be a multicultural peaceful place. When I first moved here I loved Toronto. My English wasn't so good and everywhere I was going everybody had broken English like mine. I felt at home right away. Maybe it is appropriate that I live close to this open city as in my artwork I embrace all backgrounds and cultures. Though, I never lived in Toronto; I am now 2 hours up north in the bush by a river and that is definitely magical!

### **When is a hero also a shaman? Are you one or both?**

I am pretty sure heroes don't know they are heroes until people label them that way. In difficult and challenging situations some people take action spontaneously regardless of the danger or the consequences. It is mostly after the fact that they might realize that their action was heroic. Many people along the way affected me deeply just by living their lives or by what they said to me one day. I am assuming that by living my life I am affecting others without knowing it. One person takes radical steps and changes, she/he doesn't do it to impress anyone, and for her/him it is the only way. Each life that is transformed inevitably affects others.

Twelve years ago my husband and I made a decision and took a radical step to spontaneously quit his meaningless job, our only source of income. When we did that we had a 17 month-old son and 3 month-old twin girls. It sure wasn't a "reasonable" thing to do in the eyes of our family, friends (and in the eyes of society). We didn't care about the consequences; for our spirit we had no other option. We really had no idea of what we were going to do and three years later we had 2 successful businesses! Eventually we sold our organic sprout business to further simplify our lives. We have both been at home with our kids all these years; we both have time for reflection, music and art and have more than we could have ever dreamed of.

"The shaman operates primarily within the spiritual world, which in turn affects the human world" ( **Wikipedia definition of the shaman**). So in that sense we have been shamans in our lives because we have focused our whole transformation on the spiritual aspect of it. From that the rest unfolded. A lot of people tell us that we were so courageous when we let go of our financial security and went into the unknown but when we did it, just like the heroes, we didn't think it was courageous, it was the only way.

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## **T. McClure, Eden EcoVillage Project Founder, Sonoma, CA**

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### **Introduction by T. McClure**

We are beginning to see why a unified field theory of a natural order of priorities needs to be re-established, which puts the Earth First, so we can teach our children, by setting a good example, and the rest of the world, as a demonstration project, so they can see how it works, which is what Eden was created for, and to create a new way, to prevent the need for conflict resolution, as we can see the need for that all over the world, which is coming apart at the seams, because of a lack of an Integrated Universal Doctrine of Truth.

The People, or the Nations, are not on a par with the natural world, as equals, not even the First Peoples, or the First Nations.

We make up only a small part of the whole. The Nations are all only temporary groupings that come and go because of a lack of a universal order. That is where the heart of the new doctrine is really coming from, that we are all still working on, and I do welcome full collaboration from all others, who may have a real contribution to make, and not just a destructive outburst, in a fit of revenge.

That was all well known by native peoples, but this really is something which modern day people, may have to have carefully explained to them, and this really can be proven, and demonstrated, in a very systematic way, to be a workable system, that is based on Truth.

We can use this, as a tool, to keep the peace, but the people of the pre-diasporas times will only accept these well placed words of Truth, against their will, and only if it can be shown to be a necessary tool that will serve some real purpose, because of its great expense, but they will not ever choose to believe that, and to accept that, and not pay for that, at their own expense, and they will not ever want to buy that, from free choice, like a consumer product that they will pick up, right off the shelf, as a desirable new product, unless it served their second hand self centric world viewpoints, which were all set up to serve the economy, and not the Earth, thinking that the basis of a real economy could forever be based on consumer spending, when the real basis of the Economy is the Ecological world that is being shot right out from under us.

### **Why are they so self centric? Mass Indoctrination.**

It is not seen, by them, as being in their personal favor, and it does not serve their personal God, of Self First, in the competition to get their fair share, and to keep up, and to get ahead, which is what real justice means to them, and to get even, and to get revenge, is part of that, and so in this way, they will gladly pit themselves against the Earth, as they would normally do, out of resentment and revenge, even, when they have to go head to head, against any other seriously bad contender, for top dog position, such as T, or any other competitors, like the illegal aliens, who would ever dare to go against their own super fine bad self, which is the real God that they really do put first, and they have no desire to serve any other God, which is of course, the only job we actually do have for them, to serve the community, and to serve the Earth.

It is no wonder we are up against it here, and having to fight people off, for they are a greedy and a grabby bunch, who see the EcoVillage as a product for sale, when of course, it is not.

The people will very often not even consider the all important health and well being of the Earth, as anything, but an unimportant afterthought.

The Earth can eat last, the way they see it, and only if anything is still left over, after the party, like a beaten dog, if it is still alive, but only after the people have all had their fill of drunken over-consumption, out of consumer madness.

And if the dog is dead, then they will just bury the mutt, and be done with it, when of course, it is just exactly the opposite, meaning that the people will have to eat last, only after the Earth has been fed, and if anyone dies around here, it will have to be the people, who will have to die first, under this Green New Regime, of Truth First or Die, and the last of them will not be buried at all.

**I know this sounds kind of tough, but there are many examples all around the world, where that is already happening.**

The People really are dying right now, of environment breakdown, and precisely, in those old world areas, for the most part, where the existing everyday human practices, of continual deforestation, and overpopulation, have devastated the natural world around them!

Some of the world's Poorest People have failed us miserably, and so they must be judged. Now the rich are doing it with high technology, and so they must be judged, and dismantled, as well.

Japan takes 80 percent of the world catch of Blue Fin Tuna, and Whales. How long can we keep this up? Goodbye Japan. The Corporations and the nation states are now killing the Earth as well, along with the Church, when it was already in bad enough condition. These are the powerful forces that are going to work very hard to uphold the status quo.

We cannot go directly against them, because they have us out-gunned, and out-numbered, and there are reasons why, we can only make so much of an impact, due to the law of action-reaction, so we can only disengage, for the most part, and to set up a new place that works in accordance with a whole new set of principles, and from our place of self sufficiency, we will make more waves that will travel farther, and do more good, as a living demonstration, of how we should all be living.

**We are not equal to the Earth, or Earthm, which is as a God to us that is neither male nor female, which we call Earthm, because of the buzzing, humming sounds of life.**

As Chief Seattle once said:

The People do not own the earth.  
The Earth owns the people.

**Or as Gandhi once said, The Truth is the Highest God. My name is T. That stands for Truth, in honor of the Highest God. I do hope no one is offended by that.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Interview with T. McClure by Willi Paul**

**What existing sustainable communities are you reviewing for the Eden Project?**

None. The Eden EcoVillage Project really is a unique creation that is to be built in accordance with all new principles.

**You say that Truth is the Highest God. Is this one God, within one religion?**

No. The Truth is held as being a Universal Principle that has been recognized by most all of the world's religions, as Jesus said that the Truth shall set you free, as that is the ultimate source of any Real Freedom, which is from the darkness of ignorance. Truth is the Light and the Light is the way to Freedom, which I believe is what Jesus was talking about, and this is the God that I serve, as a man of Truth, as we should all, and that means that we put Truth First!

It is when we put the wants and the needs of people first, in the place of the all embracing Truth that we find that all the injustice only compounds, and this is the cause of all war.

The idea that my rights end, at the point where your rights begin, is very much like property rights, in that sense, but that leaves a lot of room for endless disputes, over these overlapping rights which have been painted drunkenly with too broad of a brush, to begin with, and another think is that leaves no room for the natural world, to remain unspoiled, in between those spheres of dictatorship like influence, since we have given all the rights away, prematurely, to the point of excess, to the people, and their needs have been put first, out of sheer madness.

A lot of wars are caused by boundary disputes, like the one we see brewing with Israel, and Palestine, and their rights to take a big chunk out of Jerusalem, which cannot be solved by the means available to the modern democracies of the day, except to build another Berlin Wall right through the middle of town, which would be the all male solution, which leaves no space in between these two opposing parties.

We need to lay down some limits on all these imaginary human rights in favor of the natural world, which has been ignored in favor of the people's needs centrality, which is the only thing that can be expected to come out of the mass democracies of the day, along with a lot of mediocre compromises which show no regard for the Truth coming First.

When some small part of the Truth is found, then it should be quickly adopted and put into protection, like a seed, so that it might not ever be lost again, because that should be seen as being a precious part of the living whole body of Truth, which is all to be collected, and fitted together, so they can all be reunited, as these various little pieces of the Truth have a magic capability, that they all fit together, and they are all fully compatible with each other, and so you will end up with a big pile of Universal Integration on your hands, which is not a bad place to be.

What you can build with those valuable little pieces of the Whole Truth, about who we are as, individuals, and as a people, and what it is that we are engaged within, is something that can be totally depended upon, because it is fully integrated with everything else, like a magic key that opens every lock.

That Truth becomes a new set of Tools, that we can use to make further tools, and that will unlock even more Truth, giving us more tools, and that will help us to resolve conflicts before they happen, which is the only way to social justice, because you can't fix all things after they have been broken, simply using the mass democratic system, which is all based on what people want, and what they like, and not what is true.

And of course everything they believe is True lines up perfectly with what they have been taught in the public school systems, and in the mass media indoctrination environments, which panders only to the spirit of mass mediocrity, which all contains a thoughtless disregard for all Truth forever, just like the media magic of technology was something the politicians could use to defend ourselves from the Truth, and to get them elected, and none of that amounts to anything real, and our systems of conflict resolution do not work, and that shows us something by not being workable, and yet we can't understand why these people can't just work out their differences, but the reason that we have strayed from the primary focus, is because of a worldwide lack of respect for Universal Integration.

### **What are your key symbols, stories, songs and myths at Eden?**

The small child in its mothers arms symbolizes a new beginning which we represent as something that needs a mother to do all the work, which is what we are asking from those who are really very deeply interested, to become prepared to do all the work, not to come expecting to be spoiled rotten, like a child, by Eden, as the mother, because Eden is the Child, which does need a whole lot of mothers, even male mothers, but it is not the mother.

The Story of Adam and Eve, is another one, and how they lost the garden, by not protecting the Trees, which if you recall, was supposed to be central to the Garden.

That is our take on it, anyway, that this was a warning to us, not to overly exploit the garden, which represents the well balanced ecosystem, but to take good care of it, as Good Stewards of the Earth, who should take good care of the whole web of life like a newborn child.

We hold that Eden is likely to be the real name of the Earth, in its primordial state of ecological integration. We are in Eden, and we could lose Eden. What was great could turn very bad, simply due to overpopulation and a misplaced order of priorities that puts mere human needs first, before the Web of Life.

**We see ourselves as being the new Adams and Eves of this world.**

We don't think this is ancient history, about something that happened before, but we see it as a prediction about the future consequences, of runaway over-development, and the exploitation of the Earth to suit human needs.

**Another Ancient Myth would be the Myth of the Great Deluge. We feel that we are the people who are supposed to build the Ark.**

We are the people who are to get ready now for a great deluge, which we see as being the onslaught of the extreme weather consequences from global warming, as we have seen the possible beginnings of very recently, in the form of a big increase in natural weather based disasters, many of which have been flood related, but no flood was likely to have ever affected the whole world before, not like the one described, because there is not enough water for that, but this one will, because the word flood is used to signify what it will be like, when something is upon you, like a flood, that you can do nothing about changing it, not when it is already upon you, and so you can only hope to focus on saving your selves, and the animals.

Notice that the Ark is to be loaded up, two by two, which is with the smallest possible sustainable population conceivable, of all the various endangered species on Earth, to save them in these very sparse numbers, which is very risky to say the least.

But saving all the endangered species, or any at all, would never have even occurred to the tribal peoples of these ancient times. Only recently can we even begin to put this new viewpoint together, that God is not going to do it, but that we are going to have to do it, as a family tribe, with our own resources, or we will all die.

**Is sustainability like a new religion?**

That's the way we see it. Sustainability is at the heart of this whole thing. The reason we have gotten in trouble with the Earth, is that we have suspended the ancient mandate, to live sustainably, and in faithful accordance with the Spirit of Truth, and with no wishful thinking about how we want things to be different, when that is not the way it is.

We decided, to go against that mandate, to seek the Truth, in our youthful arrogance, as a matter of national pride, and to live in accordance with what we wanted to be true, and what we wanted to be true, was what we had been taught was true, and part of that was that we would never run out of resources, at least not here in America, which was somehow thought of as being a blessed land of plenty, unlike all the other continents, which could support unlimited numbers of consumers, forever, and the endless numbers of over-developers, because God is always going to be on our side, like a good hunting dog, and because God would always provide, when that is probably not True, since we are probably going to be expected to manage our resources wisely.

God may well provide, but Truth is not going to provide, because Truth does not provide, as all necessary nutrients are for us to earn, from an unspoiled natural world, and to take as we give, in the give and take of life, and in exchange for what we have put into it, and for what we have given back, to the whole web of life. God is probably not here to serve our selfish purposes. The people are not living sustainably. They have overpopulated their limited habitats. The Environmental Degradation will kill us all.

The source of all life is the Earth, or Earthm, as we call it, as in rhythm, to bring out the humming, buzzing, vibratory, rhythmic sound of all living things, fulfilling their various duties in the whole Web of Life, which is not a thing that we own, or have any right to exploit, and so our membership can be terminated for lack of contribution, and for over-consumption.

It is a self-determinate living network of life that we are a very necessary part of, and must begin to work for. Our job is to protect the Forests, and to stop the over-development, by dismantling the corporations, and to re-establish the Earth, as the highest priority, in decision making, using the Truth, in order to stop this runaway spending, instead of resorting to a popularity dispute, which leads only to more runaway spending, as we have seen around the world.

Death is to be seen, within this new religion, as being a very necessary part of the Eco-System.

Death is our good friend, and so there is no reason why that should creep anybody out, who stands in firm alliance with Truth, but it does creep a lot of people out, who are most deeply at odds with the Truth, and who are no friends with the Earth. They fear Death, as being the end of the great deception, when their little game will be over, knowing that they will be caught red handed, and that they will be hanged, for what they have been doing to the Earth.

**Can you elaborate on this: "I have already become someone who is more than just useful. Now it is time for all the others to begin to do the same thing, only differently."**

As you have probably guessed, most of these perspectives, which do flow from one into the other, quite beautifully, in full accordance with the Honor System, have actually not been created by a senseless committee of bumblers after all, which would have given us a jumbled up bunch of old junk that just doesn't fit together in the least, because of the lack of Truth being at the basis of any of the decisions, which normally always come only from what people want, and what they believe, both of which have been media generated.

**It is just like mirror mirror on the wall trip.**

They get what they want, even if it kills them, at great expense to the Earth, and it will, if we cannot take that very dangerous weapon of choice away from these little children of today, who have made no connection with Truth, and so they have no idea what that even means.

A fully integrated system, like the Honor System, which works within the Natural Order of Priorities, and which may lead us all the way to Universal Integration, was built out of the hard won conclusions of just one crazy mad man, who is not just another pandering politician, and who does not have to make any promises to anybody.

If I have specifically organized, and presented to the world, in its raw form, all these new ideas, it is not just to upset the status quo, and to stop to all this business as usual thinking, that need makes right, and that more is better, just to make people think about why they believe only what they were told they had better believe, unless they want to be kicked right out, by the educational media politicians, and society in general, where you see people getting kicked out all the time, for crossing that thin line of self-deception, when none of that has been checked out for bugs, and **even the littlest bug, as you know, can wreak havoc upon the world.**

The Truth is not just one man talking, which would be just way too easy, even though it may seem that way, like I was just spouting off just to hear myself speak, but a whole lot of good work went into building all of these ideas that all fit together quite nicely. This is something real. This is something True, and very necessary that can stand as the basis for what we are building, because everything worth doing is worth doing right. I have made a pretty good start.

Now might be a good time for some of the more significant others, to begin to make a compatible contribution.

But we like to do things, in accordance with the way it is within the forest ecosystem, when you have one species of Tree doing one job, such as I have been doing, to create a unified vision, what we need is complimentary contributions.

We don't need the others, to all take up the same kind of work, in direct competition with yours, to try to drag us back down and to replace the Truth, as the central focus, with the same old status quo junk, having to do with need, from right out of the distant past, because that would only negate the process, of further growth and enrichment, that has been planned for, as part of the unified vision, since the forest ecosystem does not need all the Trees to be cut down, such as these newly hard won principles, before they have earned a right to even join in at all.

But it does need mushrooms, and it does need ferns, and it does need snails, and so each new element that is to be added, within the ecosystem, really does need to be very different, from what is already there, so that we really will have the widest diversity imaginable of all good things that really do have a real contribution to make, and not just a lot of invasive intruders, who will come here with an entirely different set of reasons, and a personal agenda that may be coming, from their own personal needs coming first, as it is in their worlds.

When you have a well seasoned creator God, who has proven the quality of his humble creativity, knocking out a good set of ideals that really do work, like I have been doing, it doesn't help to have a beginner going against the rhythm of the new Truth Carrier, who is only initiating a whole new sound, as he is not killing the whole world, with this new Truth, even though this new Truth really is to be feared, because it really is very deadly to those who depend upon worldwide ignorance, and so this whole new perspective, really is a very real threat to the church, for instance, and the status quo in general, and we are all carrying just a little bit of that, and so that will have to be removed.

The new people, therefore, all have to try to find a way, initially, to work off of the original new material, as laid down by the author, and to produce nothing, but complementary additions, to begin with, and for the first 3 to 5 years, in a way which supports and amplifies the original signal, because it would help greatly if others could learn to reproduce the signal, and that might even be a requirement for entry, which shows how new things can be fit in, with the original materials, when they are compatible, or faithful, to the original Spirit of Truth, which was meant to lead the way towards Universal Integration.

Very often we may even have someone, who wants to bring us right back down to the status quo of no return, as illegal aliens with no entry, which the original Truth Carrier may be trying to lead the people away from, or they will simply not know any other way to play, but to pick a fight, with the original idea builder, who started this whole ball rolling, in the first place, just to serve the greater good, and to achieve the higher goal, of Universal Integration, through EcoVillage Community, as a means, and not just to become the peoples play toy, so more people can play around more insanely, within the EcoVillage Community, just because the people's needs come first party wants all the benefits, of the EcoVillage Community, and to reap the rewards, both socially and materially, which is all because of wrong education, which seeks an uneasy peace, through ignorance, over a harsh war for the Truth, which has made it so that we cannot disengage some of these people, from the one nation under the god of over-consumption forever mediocrity.

The people have been mis-educated so that they cannot join ever overcome these hurdles that make it impossible to come together in collaboration, to create the One First Nations Inter-Tribal EcoVillage Community built right on top of the bottom less pit of need and greed and the fear of death, with some of these people, because we really are choosing, to marry up, with the whole community, in the name of Truth, until death do us part, and many of them are just not going to be ready for it, because of a previous marriage that has still not been terminate.

### **Eden has 800 members; how many are likely "rebellious misfits?"**

Not that many really. All too many. This country has always honored the spirit of rebellion, which began with the revolutionary war, when we rebelled against the King, and so we have all learned the sweetly self satisfying righteousness of self destructive rebellion, but that can be a self deceptive path leading directly towards premature warfare over nothing.

Faithful actions performed on a daily basis, in accordance with Truth, and Sustainability, and with an eye towards preventing the need for peaceful conflict resolution is the real way, to make a place for peace in our world, and even some of these popular personality rights, as we have seen, can get in the way of that when they have been prematurely handed out, and fully extended, wall to wall, and are ready to be burned, before they had even been earned, which is usually because no consideration was given to the source of those rights, and who had to die to make that available.

Where did they come from? What made that right? God? Give me a break. Those were granted by cowardly self deceivers who got together and voted for what they wanted to do to the Earth, so they could rape and plunder the Earth to death in unison. That is where all these personal self centric rights really came from, to exert power over others, and to exert power over the Earth.

The bad boys, and girls, will come at us, with the clear intent, to take us right down, because they are coming from a corrupted culture of need and greed driven madness and mayhem, and I do not intend to take them all on, single-handedly, so after I have dropped them like a stone, what we will need to have is a human wall of solidarity that can go up like a firewall at any time, to be talked about later, even if we have to shut a few systems down, just as a matter of internal security, until the threat of an invasion has passed, because we are becoming a very attractive target, so the people should have some responsibilities towards the initiating organizer, just because of the amount and the quality of the work he has done, not that any agrees with anything, since that is not necessary, and that is not valued, since that does not amount to a real contribution.

### **How do you tackle the challenge of "linking people (back) to the land?"**

Our Plan is to have the people marry right up to the whole community wellness project for life, where they support the whole community, with their own resources, by making contributions, and then never taking anything back, or by sucking the life out of the community, except for what is voluntarily sent their way, by the others, throughout the community, in the form of resources and nutrients, lovingly given, as part of the natural exchange of nutrients and resources.

That may or may not balance out with what they may think they should get back, and they do expect so much, usually in return for little or nothing, so in return for their commitment of resources, of nutrients and energies, which they have pledged, above and beyond that fair share principle, which no one can control, we will set them up with a 3 acre homestead, and a 2 acre farm site, on which some will make a good living for life, valued at \$28,800. to \$45,000., and that is something they can build a house on, and that can be left to the next generation, and that can be shared among as many as 12 people.

### **How will the members govern themselves?**

We will have a Three Quarters Consensus Council, to assure that none of the underdogs can clog up the works indeterminately just to get attention, or to make people mad at them, which for some people is just a good way to stick it to the man, which they must get off on, because this does feed them in some perverse way. We can't be susceptible to these sick undercurrents of neediness and pain.

### **Do you see [DailyActs.org](http://DailyActs.org) as a useful meditation or educational path for the community?**

Very much so. There are many good things that should fit in quite nicely, under the canopy of the all encompassing Truth, and they can live under the fallen logs in the forest, and find some niche, in the exchange of nutrients and resources, as I mentioned earlier, which is like the forest ecosystem that can provide only some of the best of the many fine folks from around the world, who are really going to love this, with a lot of cooling shade, and some protection from the winds of mass self deception, along with a free water supply for life, and a stone to be your wife.

This is all about creating better habitat, for all the plants and animals to share, as long as they really do find a real niche where they can make a real contribution, and are not just draining our collective resources, out of need and greed. One rule for the herbivores might be not to chew on the trunks of the Trees.

If you do run out of food, then just let us know, and maybe we will drop a few branches, fully laden with berries, and lush green foliage, next time there is a windstorm. I am sure you folks will have much to contribute.

### **Tell me about your Natural Order of Priorities? What are these based on?**

A whole new order of priorities is now in the making, since it has been launched, and that is just my small contribution to the whole entire body of Truth, which is our God, and that is based on the Eco-Logical realities, in Truth, as our new basis for all knowledge.

### **Here is the big long story:**

The First Order of Priorities was the way of tribal community, that we are all part of the Earth. This can still be found among native peoples throughout the world.

The Second Order of Priorities was based on the church, and all the holy pronouncements of the church, which was their God, and that was imposed on a whole lot of other people, that all you had to do was to please God, which almost gave people permission to wreak havoc upon the Earth, since that would no longer be necessary, and none of the other life forms mattered, since they were just animals.

The Third Order of Priorities, or the third Reich, was based on scientific materialism, which left God out of the picture entirely, and then it went the other way completely, and that gave us even more permission to wreak havoc upon the Earth, and the animals and peoples, because there was no God to answer to, an nothing to base any decisions about right and wrong on, which lead to a sense of meaningless nihilism, and that supported Nazism.

And we are still at that place, different brand of Nazism, different place, but the idea was that whatever changes we put into place, like Global Warming, we will just be able to invent a new device that will handle that, and by the time we have completely destroyed the entire ecosystem, that will no longer be necessary, because by that time we will most certainly be able, to invent an artificial substitute for it. Even all of life is completely disposable with scientific materialism because nothing is sacred, and so it was just survival of the fittest, and might makes right, and anonymous isolation, all over the place.

**The Natural Order of Priorities**, is not an entirely whole new system, because it is very much like a return to the first order of priorities of first peoples, or native peoples, which is that of tribal community, with respect for the Earth coming first, and the protection of the whole web of life, which we call Earthm.

That is based on an entirely different principle, which is that of Eco-Logical Integration, or learning from the natural world, how to learn instead of burn, that we are a living part of the Earth, and of the community, for starters, and that we are not separate, because we are now known, to be very social animals.

We cannot live in a disintegrating artificial environment, without being fully integrated, within a healthy place to live, and a healthy community of relationships to live within, and that is within the tribal ecosystem, and that includes our own relationships to the Earth.

Everything derives from the ecological realities, such as that you have to earn it before you can burn it, and there are no Lateral Moves, and in this perspective the Earth comes first, in the Natural Order of Priorities, so we get to make some new tools that we can use, to make some clear distinctions, about what is True that would just not have been possible before. We are building a whole new basis for what we believe, drawing from the world of Ecology, and Earth Religion.

**Most of our mistakes in the past, have had to do with using a completely unnatural order of priorities that was all based on Religious theology, which has now been combined with materialistic consumerism.**

Even things like putting human need first, before the Earth, which used to seem nice enough, should have raised some red flags a very long time ago, by some of the hard truth thinkers, but it did not, or if it did they were just tagged, and bagged for removal, since they were just not towing the modern day party line of double talk no matter what.

That which was all based on some of the older theological notions, can now be seen in a new light, as a form of self deception, using an untested set of beliefs, from one people, as the foundation of all thought, and what is true for all peoples, in all climate zones.

**Religious Theology** taught the people to fear death, and to fear the magic of the Earth, and that God comes first, and that the people are the only other things that matter, with no regard for all the other living things within the web of life that we all share, so you can see why that was a treacherous deception that worked so well, because the religious chump was made to feel better than all the others, which is how these deceptions work, by giving the chump a false sense of elevation, when he was not even moving, must less was he climbing rapidly, so we got conned into thinking

that we were better, as a society that was the acme of creation, so we could disregard what all the other living things had to tell us, like the plant spirits, and the animal guides, and we could disregard what ancient peoples had accomplished, and that we could even disregard our own relationship to the Earth, or Earthm, and our great debt of gratitude, to our parents, and to our ancestors, for the many who have died, in childbirth, just so that we could get this far, let us hope, for some real purpose.

**Scientific Materialism** taught people to fear death even more, and that due to the vacuum of power, then man comes first, and all his likes and dislikes, and what he wants to believe, and specifically the white man, who was taught to put himself first, due to his slight advantages in some few ways, like scientific thinking, which does have some value, but they were taught that they could disregard what all the ancient peoples had accomplished, and that they could disregard their own relationship to Earthm, or to the Earth, and that we could forget about our own parents, and the many who had died, in childbirth, just to help us to get this far, let us hope, for some real purpose.

The Natural Order of Priorities is the new basis for re-prioritizing all these things that we have gotten wrong, and when you see wrong results, then you know you might have a wrong idea, such as we see all over the world right now, where some of the most glaring problems like overpopulation, and global warming, and peace are just about completely untouchable, using these crude tools that were handed down to us.

**Humanurians? Care to elaborate, T?**

No, I don't care to elaborate.

**T. McClure**

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# Greg Stewart, The Masonic Traveler

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1683>

## Introduction by Greg Stewart

When we are raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason we are admonished to seek “further light.” This means to ponder, to question, to seek answers and to grow and evolve as a species. Undoubtedly, this expression originated from the “Age of Enlightenment” in the 18th century which was fueled by Masonic thought and resulted in dramatic advancements in government, education, the arts and sciences, and basic God-given unalienable rights, such as freedom. This cultural period did not discourage creative thought, but rather unleashed it in the form of a proliferation of authors, artists, explorers, inventors, scientists, pioneers, and leaders. All of this because man’s ability to reason was placed on a pedestal and cherished. Basically, it encouraged people to lead a meaningful life, not slave-like. It is no small wonder Freemasonry flourished during this period and spread around the world like the locust...

...Renaissance Masons are also cognizant of the legacy they will leave behind as a result of their stewardship. They are keenly aware their successors will be judging them as either the generation who dropped the ball, or picked it up and ran with it for a touchdown.

<http://www.masonictraveler.com/excerpts/>

\* \* \* \* \*

## What are your symbols, stories, songs and myths that resonate in the Masons?

Freemasonry is dominated by its unmistakable pairing of symbols of the square and compass. The two symbols have a variety of meanings but are most often referred to as the builder’s tools, the implements of the master architect as he constructs his works. Another look at these two symbols take on a more esoteric or spiritual bend in that they represent the pairing of the celestial (compass) and the terrestrial (square) and in the space between their intersection, where typically the letter G is displayed, the interaction of the divine space is shared in the physical one. It is really a very beautiful image as it conjures up the endowment of the Divine to the mundane.

Story wise, the books of the Old Testament about wise King Solomon are the back drop to most of the Masonic allegorical mystery plays. It’s in this setting that their information is transferred.

## Isn’t alchemy deeply rooted in the Masonic Order, the famous men who created it and its rituals? Please develop this for transformational process.

Alchemy, esoteric Masonry suggests, is at the heart of Freemasonry. One of the most notable Alchemists (and Magicians) Isaac Newton is rumored to of been a mason, but sadly that is as far as the records can be traced accurately. To find the connections between Masonry and Alchemy, one must delve into works of similar nature to Masonry, and to those who have contributed to its mysteries. It is in those sources that we do find greater connections. Some examples are in the works of Paracelsus and Agrippa, and even further back to Raymond Lully as well as many others who practiced the art of transformation. In the work Ordinal of Alchemy, there are some distinct passages that can be loosely associated to the fraternity that gives us some hints of some possible connections in the similar language used.

Where Freemasonry holds much similarity to alchemy in the practice of alchemy, in the quest for the philosophers stone. It’s in this process of transformation that the ritual of masonry most closely find association. The process of changing the lead into gold becomes a metaphor for the inner transformation of the self, from the base to the higher being. It is perhaps in this process that we can find the most resonance.

## What are the top three experiences that you “got” by joining the Masonic Temple?

Top three are hard to narrow down. I would say that the association and fraternity amongst like minded brothers. Like minded in that they all strive in their own way for their own personal perfection through the degrees and onward. Also, it's given me a conduit to tap into this system of thought, which is essentially a spiritual awakening, a baptism if you will, that awakens the mind to this way of thinking, so see not in absolutes of black and white, but to appreciate the hue's and variance of the spectrum which the process of Freemasonry implies in its rituals.

The third is the expression of the ritual itself. Like a Catholic liturgy practiced over and over, just the process of doing it over and over gives it a vibratory power. It really is an eye opening experience that 'should' open one's eyes to the higher power that surrounds us.

**“When mentoring our candidates, we turn our degrees from deep, philosophical allegories into shallow fables.”**  
**(<http://www.freemasoninformation.com>) Please explain.**

This comes from a piece written about the denigration of the fraternity and the watering down of what was at one time a very rich and robust social contributor. Masonry was at one time a very revered organization that today is little know except for some of its pendant charity, and even then it is disassociated from the main of Freemasonry itself. So, with that in mind, what has consequently happened is that the fraternity has started to dumb down the broader implications of what it means to become and BE a Freemason, the allegories of the rituals are reduced to fables and consequently neutered of their deeper meaning.

**What does “new enlightenment” or the “new enlightenment” mean?**

New enlightenment means just what it suggests, an awakening of understanding, an enlightenment that was not previously experienced altering the way in which one sees their surroundings. It's something I recommend for all people to take in and see things in a new way and in a new perspective.

**Is sustainability like a new religion?**

Not sure what this question is asking. Sustainability is something more in a producing community that consumes resources (manufacturing, etc) and not something that could be easily equated to Masonry.

**Does the Masonic Temple still actively connect and support the Boy Scouts of America? What are the pros and cons?**

I'm not sure if Masonic Lodges have ever really worked with closely with the Boy Scouts. Masonry has its own youth organization, [Demolay](#), which has been the youth organization of preference since its creation in 1919. I do think that Masonry should work more closely with the scouts given their similar points of view and outlooks, but so long as Demolay is a member of the Masonic family it will likely be the more closely favored youth group.

**Please dig deep and explain the relationship between brotherhood and your rituals?**

This is an interesting question. I have to say that I do not think that the two are mutually exclusive. The aspect of brotherhood does not come before the ritual, but rather once the ritual trials have been undertaken. So, essentially, that one cannot become a brother (member) until they have undertaken the degree rituals which then disconnects them. Essentially, the degrees function to link the neophyte candidate to the organization and envelop him into the brotherhood adding him to its structure. Think of a building metaphor and each new member becomes a building block for the temple of Freemasonry.

**What does “aligned in truth” mean? Whose truth, Greg?**

Truth is a challenging subject, and I'll admit a subjective one. As no man can speak for Masonry, you can collect some of its threads and formalize an image of what it represents. Masonry could best be said to represent a strain of humanism that takes to breast the philosophical (or religious) idea of the Golden Rule which is to essentially do unto others as you would have done unto yourself. What that means is essentially, it accepts and embraces all, so long as those parts

embrace the all also. It is in this very small aspect that we can find the glow of truth, in that one man's truth is no greater (or less) than others. That we each see it in our own particular way (for better or worse) and in that composition we find resonance.

[Albert Pike](#), the author of *Morals and Dogma*, the great Scottish Rite philosopher, wrote about truth: The universal medicine for the Soul is the Supreme Reason and Absolute Justice; for the mind, mathematical and practical Truth; for the body, the Quintessence, a combination of light and gold.

**Perhaps more to the point, Pike says:**

Toleration, holding that every other man has the same right to his opinion and faith that we have to ours; and liberality, holding that as no human being can with certainty say, in the clash and conflict of hostile faiths and creeds, what is truth, or that he is surely in possession of it, so everyone should feel that it is quite possible that another equally honest and sincere with himself, and yet holding the contrary opinion, may himself be in possession of the truth, and that whatever one firmly and conscientiously believes, is truth, to him—these are the mortal enemies of that fanaticism which persecutes for opinion's sake, and initiates crusades against whatever it, in its imaginary holiness, deems to be contrary to the law of God or verity of dogma. And education, instruction, and enlightenment are the most certain means by which fanaticism and intolerance can be rendered powerless.

No true Mason scoffs at honest convictions and an ardent zeal in the cause of what one believes to be truth and justice. But he does absolutely deny the right of any man to assume the prerogative of Deity, and condemn another faith and opinions as deserving to be punished because heretical. Nor does he approve the course of those who endanger the peace and quiet of great nations, and the best interest of their own race by indulging in a chimerical and visionary philanthropy—a luxury which chiefly consists in drawing their robes around them to avoid contact with their fellows, and proclaiming themselves holier than they.

**So the idea of truth is a universal one, the what is truth that we each see. It's hard to quantify, and ever harder to put into practice, to see and say that each is right in his own eyes, when in the end it becomes about how that truth relates to you.**

Greg is the author of the new ebook [“What is Freemasonry?”](#) Also on [amazon](#).

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## Stephen Linsteadt, Writer & Painter

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1687>

### Excerpt from Stephen Linsteadt's book, "Aquarian Messenger":

About how to create a living modern myth, von Franz said people must reflect and take back their projections. "We need to take the opposites within ourselves instead of projecting them onto other people." (matter of heart) This is what happened during World War II when people projected all their problems onto the Jewish people. We take a risk when we demonize Muslims or profile people with middle-eastern decent as terrorists or potential terrorists. In our own state of imbalance we automatically bring unconscious archetypes and their energy into our lives as a countermeasure. When we deny their existence Jung says, "They become an inexplicable source of disturbance which we finally assume must exist somewhere outside ourselves." (Alch. Stud. p.36) This, he says, leads to collective delusions and 'incidents' such as revolutions, war, and to destructive mass psychoses. (Alch. Stud. p.36)

We are most definitely at a turning point in the history of modern civilization. Jung said it was totally predictable based on the psychosis of our global patient as well as a result of the course of our religious history. (10) For him, it was not just coincidental that these developments paralleled the Precession of the Equinoxes through the constellation of Pisces and into Aquarius. (11) Regardless, events are already in motion that will amount to some of the biggest challenges humans have ever faced, individually or collectively. Jung's prophesy is that the Aion of Aquarius will see the activation of the Shadow of the unconscious that will challenge us to leave our externalization and materialism and redirect our psychic energy to find a new era of Self-discovery. The Aion of Aquarius just might bring us into a place of balance where the sacred meets technology, a kind of techno-transcendentalism.

Cell phones and the internet have put people in touch with one another. The World Wide Web has been called the framework of a new global consciousness. Everything that happens everywhere in the world today is instantly posted on the internet for all to see. The airwaves are saturated with information. Synchronicity is becoming a frequent phenomenon, as one only has to think of an old friend and an invitation to be their friend on facebook miraculously arrives in your email. It is the feminine principle in action. We now have a worldwide community where people from every culture, race and religion are merging into one global consciousness. The internet is taking the masks off the men.

The alchemical process has shown us the importance of confronting our outer conditions. It calls us to reflect on our negative attitudes towards others and ourselves. It insists that we bring the spirit of nature back into our lives; that we spiritualize every moment of every day. When the masks are off the masculine, we are able to see behind the media story of the 'evil doers' and at once recognize the people in faraway lands as being our neighbors, our friends, our brothers and sisters. When we have that connection with others and view our world as a global community it causes the feminine principle to go into action, make changes to our environmental policies, help those that are starving or homeless, and to reach out to each other as though we are all in this together.

The modern living myth is told every day. It is each of us living out the alchemical process from within and on the outside. It is listening to the guidance of Sophia. It is in responding to her messages. We saw this externalized in the stories of people who were tapped on the shoulder by Sophia to gather others and carpool across the country to help the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. ...

### **Do you understand what some writers and artists are calling "new mythologies"? What inspirational sources are in your tool kit?**

When I think of the term "new mythologies," I immediately think of "space-age myths," which conjure up images of "Star Trek," "Star Wars," and other futuristic science-fiction stories, such as "Avatar." While these often include mythical themes—the hero overcomes an obstacle; confronts a psychological issues with a parent; prevails over evil, etc.—they are not, in my view, representational of the truly "modern living myth." The modern myth or the "new mythology to come" as Joseph Campbell pointed out, is the mythology of the planet, which I agree we don't yet fully possess in a complete form. (Campbell, J., The Power of Myth, p.28)

The space age has broadened our view of our place in the universe and provided new horizons to explore. On the one hand, this serves as an opportunity for us to gain a worldview that extends beyond ourselves—a singular global society in a vast universe. On the other hand, however, deep space can serve as providing more external space on which we can project our demons. Marie-Louise von Franz, a colleague of Carl G. Jung, said it best, “If our Western civilization has a possibility of survival it will be by accepting the alchemical myth.” (Matter of Heart, 1985) The new myth will include the story of how we stopped projecting our shadows onto other people, other races, countries, and religions and instead learned how to integrate our negative tendencies within ourselves.

Until we learn to do the inner work, which Jung warned was dangerously lacking in Western culture, we will continue to demonize other countries, other religions, and other races.

### **Is Joseph Campbell's work and vision supporting your experiences?**

Joseph Campbell's work stands as a beacon for our future. He insisted, as did Jung and von Franz, that the new myth must talk about the planet and the society it talks about must be the society of the planet—a global community.

### **Can you offer us some symbols, songs or stories that speak in mythological terms for the Sustainability Age?**

The bottom line to creating a new modern myth is the transformation of the individual. My favorite symbol for this is the ouroboros, the dragon eating its own tail. It is the symbol of our lower animal (serpent) self being consumed by the wisdom of our higher Self. This occurs when we rise above the conflicts we create when we think primarily about ourselves and, instead, give ourselves over to the service of others and the global community at large.

Campbell suggested that the moon might become the symbol of the new myth to come since from the lunar view there are no borders or divisions between nations, states, and people. (Campbell, J., *The Power of Myth*, p.41)

[Global Alchemy Forum](#) uses the symbol of the ouroboros surrounding the dove, whose wings encompass the four corners of the quaternio (the four directions and the four stages of alchemy).

Until we have a global modern myth that talks about how human beings tore down their physical and psychological barriers and how they reconnected to Nature and saved the planet, we will have to rely on the individual stories we tell about ourselves. These are the living modern myths that people tell about their personal transformation. They are the stories of people who helped others in a time of personal tragedy or natural disaster; stories of people coming together as one without distinction between race, creed, or country; stories of how entire societies came to the aid of the poor and malnourished realizing that the suffering of one person affects the whole.

The image of the Goddess represents the re-emergence of the matriarchal, nurturing and connecting feminine principle that brings balance to the patriarchal energies of greed that seek power and control at the expense of Nature and the planet.

### **Is sustainability like a religion?**

I view myths as offering spiritual guidance. By ‘spiritual,’ I mean the power that animates life as well as the sub-atomic ingredients that make up our physical universe. Myths also serve as metaphors for the invisible world beyond our ability to conceptualize through our limited reasoning. The spiritual quest is a journey of transformation and personal experience of the divine. Religion, on the other hand, starts out as a metaphor for the personal journey of one who has experienced unity with the unseen world. Instead of following their example, as all great mystics encourage, we tend to externalize their experience in the form of ritual or mere ‘faith’ instead of endeavoring to take the journey ourselves.

Therefore, “sustainability” in its truest sense—where individuals connect with each other and the planet through personal experience of the reality of that inner connection—is a way of life, a state of being. If ‘sustainability’ becomes a ‘religion,’ it means we have only given lip service to the process and have succumbed to the ‘green’ campaign that masquerades in front of the corporate and patriarchal greed that has led us to the brink of extinction and loss of connection with nature in the first place.

## **What bands, films or authors stir your imagination these days?**

I'm inspired by the poets and artists of our time that interact with the world of spirit; the world of Nature and the unconscious. They speak to us in symbols and metaphors. Their work is numinous—pointing to the divine. I'm inspired by painters such as Marcel Duchamp and Cy Twombly. I am also inspired by poets such as: Hafiz, Rumi, Tulsi Sahib, and Kabir. I enjoy reading mystical texts from Eastern traditions in addition to books by Jung, von Franz, Edward Edinger, and Joseph Campbell.

## **Are you a shaman?**

A shaman is one who has experienced, first hand, the world that lies beyond the one of our physical senses and everyday lives. They step out of the "collective conscious," so to say, and into the field of the unconscious. Unfortunately, not all of what exists in the unconscious is describable through language—through words. The Eastern mystics taught that access to the unconscious is attained through stillness of mind; stillness of thought. This is the goal of some meditation practices.

Am I a shaman? A shaman trainee, at best. But, aren't we all?

## **Is alchemy a process that intrigues you? Do you actively use it?**

The first stage in alchemy is where we meet the 'serpent,' our dark side. This is the blackening stage where we confront the dark side of our personality. It may require a long process of inner development and awareness until we realize that everything we view as negative in the world is a reflection of our own inner state. It is the 'blackening' stage because it is the cooking of all our impurities, our corruption and desire to conquer nature and people. All our negative tendencies go into the alembic or the alchemist's still (our body), as a witches' brew filled with toads, eye of newt, and everything disgusting. It all boils together in its own juices. We cook in our own worldly juices. The fire that cooks is the heat of Tao, Logos, the Word, Creative Song (Power).

The heat is the purifying agent. Matter boils until nothing remains except the purified steam that rises above. This steam represents the second stage, the whitening stage. This vapor is our essence, our pure and true selves that rises and is separate from the worldly soup. It is the alchemical metaphor for the soul's release from matter. It is quite beautiful. You can imagine the vapor floating above the physical world, drifting up to meet and merge into Sophia who then embraces you and manifests in her full glory. This second stage is where we become quieter and more detached and objective. It is the stage where we are connected with our higher Self inwardly as well as to those around us and with Nature—the planet.

When we apply the alchemical process to our every day events, we learn to accept the difficulties we encounter as lessons in awareness. These outside events teach us not to react from a place of self-interest but to step outside our self into the view that looks to the well-being of those around us. The alchemical process is an active process psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually and serves as a metaphor for the sustainability of the planet.

## **Are you seeing any shifts away from traditional religion to a more Nature-based view?**

The younger poets in Global Alchemy Forum have impressed me with how much they have individuated from the "collective conditioning." They have challenged the 'beliefs' of their parents and society as a whole and are willing to step off the edge into the abyss of the unconscious. They find that the religions of the past no longer serve their self-reflecting psyches. They came into the world with eyes wide open to what no longer serves humanity; to what threatens our sustainability. They have seen that the corporate ladder doesn't lead anywhere except to an empty cloud of unfulfillment. Instead, they embrace the concept of Nature and are concerned with the health of the planet. They are interested in communes, where people live in harmony and strive for personal growth and higher consciousness.

## **How do you connect mythmaking and innovation in your work?**

As a painter, I rely heavily on the mythological and the symbolism of the unconscious. I strive to create a sense of the luminous in my work whether it is painting, poetry, or storytelling. Innovation, for me, only occurs when I am able to find that quiet place where Sophie is able to work through the brush, pen, or keyboard.

**Who is Sophia? "The modern living myth is told every day. It is each of us living out the alchemical process from within and on the outside. It is listening to the guidance of Sophia."**

Sophia is a central figure of the Gnostic texts and is a central figure in the Odes of Solomon found in the Gnostic text, Pistis Sophia. Every mystical branch of every religion refers to her. She is universal.

The early Judeo-Christian Gnostics referred to her as the Wisdom of God. She is God's feminine half—the compassionate side. She is the Holy Ghost, the Logos, Word, or Tao. She is Universal Intelligence projected into this realm by the First Manifested described in Gnostic Cosmology. She originates from regions outside time and space; from the world of the Shamans—the unconscious. She is infinite intelligence and wisdom always providing guidance and help to those who ask. Because she is beyond space and time, she is the source of synchronistic events and exists just behind the veil. Sophia sends us messages in dreams, often found through archetypal symbols found in mythology and alchemy. In psychological terms, von Franz describes her as representing the collective unconscious as "the sum of all the original idea patterns of reality." (von Franz, Alchemy, p.184)

In St. Thomas Aquinas's alchemical treatise, <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/auror-8.html> Aurora consurgens, Sophia seeks the human being who is worthy of her. She whispers in our ears in those quiet moments when we are still, to come and draw near. "Leave the ways of the Corruptor, and come near to me and I will enter into you and make you wise in the way of Truth." (Ode to Solomon, p. 146) This represents the mystical marriage of our soul with the godhead. It represents the merging of our consciousness with our 'diamond body' by turning off the 'out-flowing' of our individual will. Once this happens we will possess a higher state of awareness and gradually melt and merge into something else—our beloved.

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"The alchemical process has shown us the importance of confronting our outer conditions. It calls us to reflect on our negative attitudes towards others and ourselves. It insists that we bring the spirit of nature back into our lives; that we spiritualize every moment of every day."

**- Aquarian Messenger**

**Stephen Linsteadt**

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[Stephen Linsteadt](#)

## **Caitlin Hackett, Artist, Brooklyn, NY**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1694>

### **I feel Graham Sutherland's spirit-vision weaving in and out of the transformed bodies in your work. Reactions?**

I had actually not been aware of [Graham Sutherland's](#) work before this interview, but having now looked his work up though I can see a how my work resonates with his, in the way we both meld together separate bodies and energies within our work, overlapping human and animal forms to create a new beings. I certainly hope that my work has a spiritual sensibility to it, as I am fascinated by the idea of a creatures' true essence; what it actually means to be human, to be an animal, and the lines that divide the reality of existence from the concept of existence. I want to understand where 'spirit' or 'soul' fits into the true nature of any living thing, and how the spirit of a creature could alter its physical body, if only because of the way it is perceived by human kind. However in my own work when I combine the human and animal forms I am equally interested in the reality of the creature that I am drawing and how it would survive and function should it come to life, not only in creating a rumor of reality, a spirit. I want to in some way alter the viewer's reality, to give them a sense of a corporal form even though the drawing is two-dimensional. I want my creatures to be simultaneously wraiths and living things, capable of both haunting, and breathing.

While I am fascinated with the way our emotional connection to the spirit of an animal can haunt us, the idea of something living and breathing that is both human and animal has more of an emotional impact on me. As a young child I longed to be an animal myself, and always dreamed that there would be a choice as I grew older, to choose whether you wanted to be a human, or an animal. Obviously I discovered that no such choice existed, however I spent much of my youth galloping about has a horse or a cat, howling at the moon and squirreling my way up the redwoods in my backyard. I tried as much as possible to bend my human body into an animal form, and it is that awkward attempt at transformation and mutation of the body that interests me, and how it has tied me to the natural world ever since. It is a very physical pain for me, to see the natural world ravaged, and to watch the vanishing of wilderness, more physical than spiritual, and that discomfort is put into all of my drawings.

### **Alchemy is about the process of creation and transmutation. Are you praying or meditating when you draw?**

I neither pray nor mediate while I draw, I work almost solely at night, (partially due to my work schedule, partly because that's when I am most creative) I spread out my larger pieces onto the wood floor of my apartment, and then sitting on top of them barefooted I move slowly around to work on whatever sections snag my mind or hand. I don't listen to music really, or ever have television on, I like to work in silence most often because the stories that go through my mind influence the way the drawing works out, and my mental and emotional narrative feeds into the piece. Due to how long the pieces take to complete they alter slowly over time, and morph far from what I originally envisioned, which is part of the process that I find most exciting.

### **Give us a deeper understanding of "pseudo mythical imagery." Are there humans in this space with you?**

There is a long history throughout the mythologies of the world of humans being transformed into animals, trees, insects, and a menagerie of other creatures. In Greek mythology we have Daphne, who was transformed into a laurel tree, Aedon who was transformed into the first nightingale, the half dragon-half man Cecrops, Arachne who was turned into a spider for offending Athena, and countless others. In Hindu mythology there are also countless instances of humans being transformed into animals, humans with animal attributes and limbs, gods with animal attributes and limbs, or who are wholly animal in form, and princes and princesses spawned from fish, birds and deer whom manage to receive the kings seed. While my own work is not based on any specified myth, nor pulled from any religion or history book, it echoes these transformations and hybrids and recalls a sense of history because of my illustrative style. There are always human's in my mental space, as well as my creative space, just as there are always animals floating through my consciousness. I am interested in human relationships with nature, as well as with human behavior in general, and our own essential animal nature. I live in New York City, so there are always people around me. Even as a sleep I can hear the sounds of people throughout my apartment building through the night, footsteps and doors slamming, cars honking, people yelling or laughing, music that never stops, there is a constant hum of human activity that reflects in my mind the hum of the entire world, which buzzes ceaselessly with human life. In my work I seek to reveal the remnants,

the outer edge of the human buzz, where it mingles with what is left of wilderness and natural spaces, where the friction between what is human and what is animal sparks.

### **Do you see national parks and nature preserves as sacred or heartfelt these days?**

To me they are sacred and heartfelt spaces, they are island sanctuaries amid constant development, the last refuge for many an interrupted migration and hunted species. It's hard for me to say if they are sacred in the national conscience, although I was heartened recently by an ad series in the subways of New York that honored the national parks, and the documentary series that PBS put out about them. However I feel that most people are unaware of the treasure that we have preserved, nor the risk that many of our other remaining wild spaces face, as logging roads cut ever deeper into forests, and housing developments push ceaselessly outward. Living in New York is interesting in many ways, as it provides a world in miniature, we have our parks, Fort Green, Prospect Park, Central Park, amongst many others, and you have millions of people living together, however we live stacked up, so that we take up very little space. In my mind, although I miss living in the wild, empty spaces surrounded by trees, and rolling hills in northern California, I know that this is the best way to preserve wilderness, instead of each resident having their two cars and 1.5 acres in the suburbs, we take the subway and live in 600 square feet of space (or less).

### **Why not close all of the world's zoos and return the animals to the "wild?"**

While there are many zoos which are failing, especially in these harsh economic times, it is impractical to 'release' the animals living there, most of them were bred in captivity, and could not hope to survive in their native habitats without human help. Also, many zoos play an important role in introducing people, especially children, to animals, and attempting to build respect and compassion towards them. In places like New York City, or Chicago, or LA where there is neither a lot of wilderness, nor many 'wild' animals to be found, these zoos provide one of the few windows to the wild creatures of the world. However if I could choose a path for the world's zoos, it would be to slowly specialize, to transform zoos over time to cater to specific species, especially those most endangered. Specializing in just a few species would allow for zoos to focus their limited space, funds, and energy more effectively, and could promote breeding programs for endangered species as well as better educating people on the effects of over development, poaching, deforestation, etc. However this is only my uneducated dream, what it takes to run a zoo and what it would take to transform so many zoos is hard for me to say, it would certainly have to be a gradual change, and many zoos would probably opt to continue running as they have, in hopes of attracting a wider crowd with a wider selection of animals.

### **"The mutation of the animal created by the human interpretation of the animal." Where are we taught this? How can we learn a more loving way?**

The way we are taught as children to interact with animals can last a life time, growing up I personified, rather than objectified, all the animals in my life, which is perhaps a no more realistic view on their true nature, but at least it led me to care for and respect them. However the way I grew up is not typical for this country, although it is typical for the place I grew up in. I was raised backpacking, and running through the woods, my parents taught me at a young age to respect nature, and to love animals, and my passion for them bloomed at a very young age. People ask me when I started to draw animals, and my answer is that I have always, they were the only things I ever wanted to draw, there were never people in my early drawings, only cats and horses and foxes, countless creatures danced across the images of my youth.

Our families teach us much about how to treat animals, as do our schools as we grow up, and our peers. Where I grew up I was taught about invasive species in school, was taken on school trips to the beach and to the local creeks to do biology projects about the effects of pollution and the effects of invasive species on the native ones, the affect of development, my friends loved to go camping, and my family spent every summer camping and hiking through the wilderness, and redwood forest was my backyard, and thus my love for the natural world was nourished on all sides. This does not often happen though, if you grow up in a city, without pets, or without any idea of the natural world, it is hard to have respect for what you don't know or care about. Within our educational system there needs to be a focus on respect for all living things, you don't need to love camping, or be a fan of every animal you meet, but if when people

are young they are taught to respect living creatures, then we will see much of the cruelty towards animals disappear. Within families it is more challenging, if the family a child is raised in is cruel to their pets, or speaks with cruelty or disregard to animal life, then it is hard to undue that damage, but we can make an effort in our schools, and should.

**Please explain (through your work?) how you are 'creating a language that speaks about the human animal relationship and the natural and unnatural elements of it.'**

By combining human and animal forms I am attempting to create a visual language, a kind of a trigger for the viewer's muscle memory, to feel what it is to be an animal. By nature, we are all animals, humans are simply another species, a dominant species, but another large land dwelling mammal all the same. Because of that there comes the question of what is natural, if we are just another animal, building our colonies and digging our tunnels, then does that make all that we have made natural as well? Are our cities, our suburbs, our factories, our vehicles and our pollution, all as natural as termite mounds? However, our predators are few, we hunt each other, and we are prone to diseases and natural disaster, but unlike almost every other animal on this planet, we do not have a natural predator, no other creature which hunts us or keeps our population in check, because we have become the top predator. I don't know the answer to the question, but I hope that in the narrative quality of my work I am asking the question and in so asking creating a dialogue with the viewer, a set of hieroglyphics that are meant to make the viewer question their own body, and what they feel separates it from the body of an animal.

**How can your vision and art help the viewer "experience life through the metaphysical, the digital, and the psychic?"**

These are actually the things that I would like to, with my work, remind people to turn away from, from time to time. We live in a world where we are all perpetually hooked into the Internet, it is aptly called the digital age, where we are blasted with political and spiritual views and opinions. I am interested in the physical world, in our relationship with our own bodies, our animal bodies, which are rooted in the health of the world. Nature, however transcendental I may be at heart, is most of all a physical thing, a survival game. Animals must survive, they are dominated by their physical needs most of the time, they have to eat, and raise their young, and protect their dwindling territories, in a world where they have been sidelined. No matter our philosophies, our religions, our facebook status' or whether or not we have an i-pad, what nation we live in or political party we support, we all have to survive on this planet, we all have these corporal bodies, which tote around our human minds and spirits, and hold us to this world. I am interested in bodies, in the physical needs that make the health of the natural world relevant to everyone, whether or not they care to know about it. It is our animal bodies which relate us so keenly to the other animals we share this world with, even if it is our human minds that allows us to love, accept, ignore or deny this connection.

**How do you compare animal identity with human identify?**

I've spent a lot of time thinking about that, and when I was younger I thought I knew the answer; that animals were somehow pure, wild and free and noble in their actions, free of human greed and rage and pollution. However, that was a mask, an idea as false as the notions of old that animals were like automatons, moving through life on a set track, acting out set actions at set times, without desire or feeling. Animal identity is of course, much more complicated than either view, much as is human identity. To be honest, I don't know how to compare animal identity with human identity, because for all that I personify animals, it is just that, laying my human emotions and ideas on top of the animal form, it is impossible for me to say if I am close or far from the mark. Although I am an animal, I am a human animal and I have only ever lived as a human, despite my childhood desires.

People and animals are driven by instincts, by desires, greed, lust, familial love, however most humans have the luxury of not having to fight for their survival every day, we have grocery stores, apartments, plumbing, electricity, animals for the most part do not have this luxury, and most of their energy throughout their lives is spent defending their territory and hunting for food, while raising their babies. It seems to me, however, that they must feel somewhat as we do, even if this is just a romantic idea of mine, that they have compassion that is not simply instinct, they have greed and wage wars; they are neither dark eyed reflections of innocence, nor heartless automatons wandering vacantly through the receding forests of the world. Where their true identity lies though, I don't think that I am qualified to say, it is what I

wonder in my work, a patchwork of concepts, wondering about the enigma of identity, human and animal alike.

**Would you call your work science fiction or fantasy?**

It's a little bit of both I would say, as I have neither in mind specifically as I work, some pieces I envision as future worlds, patchwork creatures left in the husk of the future, manmade wrecks, more along the lines of science fiction. Other drawings I see most as ghosts, or wraiths of creatures of old, from forgotten lands, or long cleared forests, which I suppose would fall more into fantasy. My ideas are constantly shifting, and the stories that I have in mind for each piece alter over time. They are preludes, and warnings, futures visions and mad love stories between development and wilderness, some part fantasy and some part science.

**What are the key lessons from your animals that you wish to bestow to children?**

To value life, and the lives of the creatures that we share this world with, because we are only one life form amongst countless others, and we are more similar to them that we like to think at times. To respect that which is 'other' than themselves, and to have a sense of kindred spirit with all those creatures that live amongst us.

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## **Elizabeth Slate, Founder of The Alchemical Nursery, Syracuse, NY**

<http://www.planetshifter.com/node/1701>

### **What new /traditional alchemic processes, symbols and texts will you bring to permaculture?**

In my opinion, the alchemical process is one of creation – the manifestation of divine will. My personal philosophy is that alchemy is the enactment of intentional transformation and growth. Ultimately, I see this growth and development to be of positive change and spiritual awakening.

Life is creation. Life is art. Alchemy is art and creation. The art of living intentionally is alchemical process, and that process embodies all aspects of doing, informed by being. Permaculture is the art of living intentionally. It is a big picture systems approach to doing, informed by awakening being, that is a process of co-creative, continual learning and growing. So, permaculture is itself an alchemical process.

### **How does The Alchemical Nursery (TAN) infuse spirituality into the day to day “seed to dinner table” of permaculture?**

Spirituality is the day to day art of living intentionally, which involves unfurling being and doing with awareness, and the desire to develop awareness in all interconnected aspects and areas of life. Our work is therefore inherently spiritual work. Aside from the overall obviousness of everything we do being a spiritual “work” in progress, we have in the past hosted shamanic journeys, and are currently developing a program to include a Spiritual Resource Center.

### **What leaders and groups provide the foundation for TAN? What opportunities and tools do you share with [Livingmandala.com](http://Livingmandala.com)?**

We are a diverse group of passionate, creative thinkers who are involved in the community in various ways. Speaking for myself, I would be willing to share whatever opportunities and tools with livingmandala.com that I can, however am unsure at this point what is required or desired. Non-profit project management and consultation? Up-cycled crafts? Energy work? Raw chocolate bars? Holistic health coaching?

### **How would you teach “co-creating” to seniors?**

This is an interesting question. It may help to know what the setting would be – I think in any situation co-creation starts with shared interests and needs. Of course in the grand scheme of things I would say our collective shared interest is living healthily and happily in harmony with all that is – but it is easy to forget that larger interconnected reality in the day to day drama of individual existence.

So if the said seniors live in the same retirement community for example, perhaps the focus would be a project in which each member has a clear and vested interest. Group decision making and facilitation skill building would be excellent topics for workshops to produce successful co-creative projects. That, and having willing participants. If people are not ready to do the work, you will be hard-pressed to convince them otherwise. The work cannot be enforced – only suggested and made available to those who feel ready.

### **Is sustainability like a new religion?**

Wow - comparing sustainability to religion sounds like a devil's advocate position on what could be considered a hot button issue – potentially offensive and controversial, but definitely very thought-provoking!! How fabulous! I think for a lot of people “religion” is a charged word that smacks of dogma and oppressive, top-down, shaming, fragmenting practices and ideas. However, I think shaming and fragmentation also occurs amongst those who think a lot about how to live lightly on the earth – including shouldering a lot of personal guilt about inherited and difficult to avoid unsustainable ways, and carrying harsh judgment of others who do not live up to whatever personal ideas about the musts and shoulds of living sustainably, which in turn creates division.

Sustainability is such a broad notion about which people all have different ideas of what it means to them, and different capacities for adhering to their beliefs in action and lifestyle. There are the issues of greenwashing and hypocrisy to take into consideration.

I think non-judgment is very important – for those who are awakening and choosing to live with intention, there is not much use in blaming unconsciousness for unconsciousness. Easier said than done of course when you begin to see the implications of continued unconsciousness at work – and when personally suffering the pains of oppression and pollution on all levels that result from it. Death destruction disease. May feel like a bummer that we can only be responsible for our own path. To try to force another awake causes frustration, anger, and resentment for both parties. Is it a fruitless endeavor?

Nurturing love and understanding in the face of these challenges is great spiritual work for each of us. To accept and have faith in the process acknowledges our own lack of control – and acknowledges how we are all connected. Our personal decision to live intentionally cannot force anyone else to do so before they are ready – and we cannot ultimately escape the products of the unconscious actions of others – however frustrating and upsetting that may be. We are all in this together.

So to answer your question, I don't know! Does anybody?

### **Is music and art part of the permaculture vision there? Is art more... Nature inspired?**

Permaculture, in my understanding and opinion, is a holistic approach to life – it is about systems and interconnection. How could art and music be somehow separate, or not a part, of living?

“The goal of evolving an ecovillage in the context of a currently existing urban mosaic is a long-term project, growing from an eco-house to an eco-block to an eco-hood to an eco-village. To achieve this goal, Alchemical is working on creating the major supporting systems of everyday life that any ecovillage needs for success.”

### **Please tell us about the elements and implementations of the “supporting systems?” What are the political hurdles?**

The supporting systems, in my opinion, are the people – the agents of change – the enactors of divine will and creative process. The political hurdles are real, and imaginary at the same time. I think that half the battle, for each of us, is to believe in what we are doing, and to believe in ourselves. Reputation and connections aside, I think the sheer force of confident action, and the even more impressive presence of one who is consciously developing themselves – the shining of their emerging being – is something that can move mountains. Impossibility is a mind-made artifact.

### **Can you define sound alchemy and how human-made noises will work with Natural sounds?**

I love to dance and I know how music moves me. It is a very ecstatic experience for me – eliciting past life tribal body memories. Music speaks to my soul, and in my body's irrepressible enactment of this deep movement, I feel that I am remembering and feeling my oneness with all that is. And so it goes when I commune with the natural environment. It is a euphoric recognition of connection – an energetic realization of the joy and love that is imbued in our world and carried within ourselves – expressed by all around us, and reflected in our doing – including our music. Music is art, expression of life, of love, of being. Our natural world is also art, an expression of that which cannot be named. No small wonder that they should elicit similar experiences for me!

### **How does TAN work with all ages and backgrounds?**

We all do what we can to reach out to those in our community. With that being said, there is always more to be done – and there are most certainly aspects of our organization that have yet to be seriously developed. With a very limited budget and no paid employees, we do not currently have the capacity to develop and maintain targeted programming. However, I believe we do have an impact on a diverse group of people through the events that we do participate in or initiate. As with life in general, our outreach and impact is progressive in nature, and organically unfolding.

## Can you teach permaculture online?

Teaching permaculture. Hmm. Well, I would have to say that certain aspects of permaculture can be taught – and certain aspects of permaculture are grown over time, through personal and co-creative experience and development. So to answer this question, I would say that in some ways, yes you can, and in some ways, no you can't! I think certifications, classes, and workshops are great starting points for further development, as well as excellent arenas for dialogue, networking, and co-creation.

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### Elizabeth Slate Bio -

Mz. Slate is the Founder of The Alchemical Nursery, and a spiritual activist, and visionary, creating community from the inside out.

“Developing a relationship with myself, Gaia, and the universe has been my progressive journey of ecstatic love and joy for all that is. It has reaffirmed for me why I am here and what I have always felt called to do - which is to offer myself to the world and the universe in service. My Self and my Love are my gifts to the world. I am eager to do all I can to share these gifts, and to help others find their own place of joy, gratitude, unwavering love and abundance deep within themselves, and to see it in all around them.

This is the work of many lifetimes and people and paths. Taking a holistic approach to life and its challenges gives me hope for personal and collective evolution.”

### Elizabeth Slate

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