

# eARTH

**An open submission invitation for artists and writers (poetry/prose/science) for exhibition as part of the 2017 Norfolk & Norwich Festival and Open Studios.**

**This briefing outlines the issues and information that the Greenhouse Trust is inviting artists to respond to as part of its *Climate Change Challenge*.**

**Work will be displayed and published during May and June 2017 in the Greenhouse Gallery.**

## **OPEN SUBMISSION DETAILS**

**£5 PER ENTRY (maximum of 3 per person)**

Images and words should be emailed to: [gallery@greenhousetrust.co.uk](mailto:gallery@greenhousetrust.co.uk)

Files for each submission should be no larger than 3MB

### **ENTRY DETAILS**

Along with the attachment, your email should include your name and details of the work including:

Title, dimensions (inclusive of frame where appropriate), method and materials used, edition numbers if appropriate and selling price. Please also make an appropriate donation via the Greenhouse website and confirm the date the donation was made in the email

### **VISUAL WORK**

Height and width of work no more than 1m (including frame).

Work should relate directly to and have been produced to fulfil the eARTH brief.

Work must be available for display and sale during the Festival and Open Studios exhibition period.

30% Commission is subtracted from the sale price to assist with the costs of arranging and promoting the Climate Change Challenge.

Conceptual artwork entries can be sent as a written proposal with illustrations and/or supporting imagery. The work, or a component part of the conceptual work, shall be saleable.

### **WRITTEN WORK**

5,000 Word maximum length for stories, articles etc.

Each poem or visual text should be emailed as a separate/formatted jpeg file.

**ENTRY CLOSING DATE SAT. 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017**



## eARTH briefing

The earth beneath our feet is fundamental to life itself. As the briefing below describes in more detail, soil is amazing:

- *A teaspoon of soil contains more life forms than there are human beings on the whole planet*
- *Soil is the biggest terrestrial store of carbon – more than all the plants and trees above ground: 3 billion tonnes in the UK alone.*
- *This makes soil an important part of the fight against climate change.*
- *The way that we manage our soils can make a big difference to how much carbon they store – so it is really important to farm in the right ways.*
- *It takes 1,000 years to create an inch of top soil.*
- *But if soil is left bare, it can be washed or blown away.*
- *This causes water pollution, and can particularly damage fish breeding grounds.*
- *This is caused by poor farming practices but also by deforestation in tropical regions, often to make way for crops to feed animals that are then sold to us as meat.*
- *Soil erosion has been the cause of famines and farming devastation throughout human history – such as the American dustbowl of the 1930s, or more recently in East Africa.*
- *Healthy soils hold water, reducing both floods and the impact of drought. This property will be increasingly valuable as climate change causes the UK to get warmer and wetter, with more extreme weather events.*
- *Chemicals are used in place of soil management, disguising the declining state of abused soils. However, as the soil degrades this is becoming evident in declining or plateauing crop yields. It is a sad state of affairs, but many allotments have better soil quality than Norfolk's agricultural farmland.*
- *The UN has launched a 'decade of soils' to celebrate this important natural asset.*
- *There are solutions to help protect our soils for the long term, demonstrated through organic farming and agro-ecology.*

## Additional background information

### *Working off those fossil fuel calories: farming, soils and climate change*

Fossil fuels can be described as “Ancient Sunlight”, as they represent energy captured from the sun by photosynthesis in ancient plants. For every single calorie of energy in our food we are burning 10 calories of fossil fuel energy in farm machinery, transport, fertiliser, pesticides, heating greenhouses, and packaging.

Intensive food production negatively impacts the soil, local food security, and our personal health. Importing food is vital to the diet of the UK but our consumption of high input, non-organic and intensive mono-cultural crops contributes to soil damage overseas. Reliance on fossil fuel derived chemical inputs is responsible for much of this soil degradation. We may believe that we are not responsible for deforestation. Yet the demand for livestock feed, particularly soya and maize, grown in countries like Argentina and Brazil is increasing the demand for mono-cultural crop land, and contributing to global warming.

Extremes of weather are made worse by unhealthy soils and poor land management. Bare or damaged soils are more at risk of soil erosion. Soil washed away clogs up rivers and lakes, increasing the flood risk for people living downstream. Healthy soils store and regulate water flow and mitigate climate change. Restoring carbon organic farming practices such as crop barriers, inter-cropping and rotation demonstrate how to improve drought tolerance in soil and water retention during periods of flood. This also reduces water and chemical run-off from fields.

### *We need to grow our food closer to home using organic and low-energy methods*

It is a truly remarkable fact that it takes a 1,000 years to grow an inch of top soil. Place this alongside the escalating destruction of top soil and it is not hard to grasp the need to change, and to change fast.

The word 'culture' was historically used in the 'agri'cultural' sense, only from the 16<sup>th</sup> century has it been used figuratively. Today seems like an important moment in time to put the soil back in both culture and farming.

### *Silent Spring, summer, autumn and winter*

Farmers kept soil records until the end of the second war. In the seventy years since then the escalating impacts of industrial agriculture has turned farmland from soil to dirt. Where once fields would be wildly alive with the noise of birds, insects and pollinators, the landscape has been compacted, mechanised and denuded of species. The classic 'Silent Spring' text sounded the alarm and since then the seasons and soil have been under increasing pressure.

Such is the exhausted state of farmland that allotments and gardens now contain more flowers and animal species than most agricultural land. In Britain gardens cover more than one million hectares, far exceeding the combined area of the UK's nature reserves, so they are an important resource.

The potential for soil to play a key role in climate stabilisation is enormous. By increasing the volume of organic matter soil can increase the quality of food, farming, nature and help stabilise the temperature of the planet.

## What are we waiting for?

A recent parliamentary select committee considering soil quality and agricultural strategy has already been presented with evidence that reveals on current trends:

- *30% of climate emissions will come from farming by 2050.*
- *40% of food will be lost without pollinators*
- *95% of neonicotinoids go into the soil with no research on the impacts on the soil or ourselves. These pesticides have been shown to harm bumblebees, one of our most important pollinator species.*
- *0.4% increase in all global soil carbon would deliver carbon savings equivalent to anthropogenic emissions*

## Food 4 health

Alongside the spread of agri-business, our food supply is now largely in the grip of global food and marketing corporations. The drive for ever cheaper food has led to soil degradation, which means the soil can no longer perform its natural functions. Consequently, food producers have become reliant on artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. These are undermining our health and damaging vital ecosystems on which life depends.

Governments and policy makers are doing little to turn the tide on our modern, unhealthy, de-natured diet and lifestyle choices. Treatments are almost solely focused on the use of medication – to the benefit of Big Pharma and the detriment of most others. The escalation of allergies and intolerances can be linked to ‘cheats’ in the food production system, such as the Chorleywood process for bread production which reduces the need for raising the dough but also means that gluten is not broken down as it is in traditional bread baking.

Over the last 50 years the levels of key minerals within fruits and vegetables in the UK alone have declined by up to 70%. We need to create a new relationship between ourselves, food & the environment in order to reclaim our health & protect the earth that we depend on.

## Creating solutions: Agro-ecology

Agro-ecology is a system of agriculture and land management that looks to natural ecosystems to inform agricultural practice feeding the soil to feed plants and address the damage already done by agribusiness and intensive farming.

Healthy soils provide food, fuel and fibre for clothes. 95% of our food comes from soil and one quarter of all known species live within soil. Poor soil reduces food production. Across the world 25% of all soil is severely degraded and soil erosion is a major issue. Around ten million hectares of land are abandoned every year, due to soil erosion alone. Around one-third of the world's arable land has been lost since 1960 as a result of soil degradation.

## The potential of carbon farming

Carbon farming is a term used to describe a suite of crops and agricultural practices that sequester (capture and store) carbon in the soil and in above ground perennial biomass. If widely implemented, these practices have the capacity to sequester hundreds of billions of metric tons of carbon from the atmosphere in the coming decades.

Greenhouse gas emissions to date have already committed us to a changed climate. However, if we combine carbon farming with a massive global reduction in fossil fuel emissions, we may still be able to step back from the brink of disaster. Unlike high-tech geo-engineering strategies these practices also feed people, create more fertile soils, and contribute to the wider ecosystem health.

This may seem like a bold claim – and it is – but as we scramble for solutions to our climate catastrophe, the incredible sequestration potential of the crops and practices are waiting to be applied.  
The Global Carbon Farming Solution has been largely ignored.

### **FUNDRAISING:**

The *eARTH* auction catalogue contains books, paintings, prints and music donated to raise funds to support the staging and promotion of the exhibition and the work of the Greenhouse Gallery.

If you would like to donate books or artwork for auction during next years  
Norfolk and Norwich Festival

Please contact the Greenhouse: [gallery@greenhousetrust.co.uk](mailto:gallery@greenhousetrust.co.uk)

# **GREENHOUSE & GALLERY**

*Exploring climate change through the visual arts  
and demonstrating sustainable living since 1994*

Env. Education Charity No. 1037992

James Sillett – Norwich School – Autumn Abundance

