

**'How does Eco-Feminism connect with the use of Natural Materials and a sense of Magic
to promote empowerment within a contemporary art guideline?'**

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Word count: 6598

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons) University of

Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea,

Fine Art

12th December 2025

Abstract

This thesis explores the relation and connection between Eco-Feminism, natural materials and magic. Looking into how such notions translate into art and their effect on artistic practices. Delving into works from Niki De Saint Phalle, Kiki Smith to Monet, Matt Tommey, Barti Kher and Jackie Morris. Researching realms of inspiration and connection, from art activism, healing material contexts and automatic painting. How one thing entangles another leading down new exciting path's of enquiries.

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Authors Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own research and work.

Prelude

“And the falcon was a pretty bird,
Wonders as she flies,
She asks us easy questions,
We tell her easy lies.”

Farina , M. and R. (1965). *The Falcon*.

These lyrics highlight a personal interest in the connection between eco-feminism, natural materials and magic. Written by Mimi and Richard Farina it is an enchanting yet haunting melody exploring captivity, power rolls and the consequences of suppressing one's true nature.

The feminine is a mothering spirit.

This essay will explore eco-feminisms relationship in the broader context of feminism. Standing for equality to all, Eco-feminism at its core explores the relationship and connections between women, nature and similarities in the way they have been treated through the years, first coined by “French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974” (Miles, 2018). Including subjects of equality between genders, respect for organic process and holistic approaches, intuition, connection and evaluation. Upholding commitments to both women and the environment as they can both be recognised as one and the same, such as the term ‘mother nature’ suggests. Emphasising and analysing how women and environment are viewed in a male orientated world, while offering new world views where all life is valued, the earth is sacred and our dependency for it is recognised. The movement

evolved “in the United States in late 1970’s” (Miles, 2018) , with the idea that combining these topics that are both depicted at times to be chaotic and in need of control, could promote respect for both feminism and environmentalism, while connecting like-minded groups to rebel and slice through exploitations of these narratives.



Fig 1 & 2

In religions throughout the ages, women have been known to be strongly connected to nature and other worlds, being named as wise women or witches. There are 12th century churches such as Kilpeck Church in Herefordshire (fig 2), that have stone carvings called Sheila Na Gigs (Fig 1), depicting women holding open their vagina's, the wooden carvings of the Sheila Na Gigs all having mostly been set on fire through the ages for their crude nature. Although true meaning is unknown speculative theory has emerged as to the association with the church and what they depict, a symbol for female lust or fertility, a creator of

worlds and galaxy's, a figure of reclaimed sexuality. They spark heavy debate in feminist subject areas; songs are written and stories told. Niki De Saint Phalle collaborative work 'she-a cathedral' created for an exhibit 'Hon' in Stockholm. 'Hon' meaning Her in Swedish,

"artists agreed to making a Nana in the style of Phalle a kind of fertility goddess laying on her back, in which there was a whole playful, animated world, shown to the public, who must to top it off pass between her legs" (*Centre Pompidou, 2025*).

This temporary piece created scandal but was hugely successful, when it was destroyed only the head remained. It is interesting to note it was not made of natural material despite being created to represent feminism and the environment.



Fig 3.

The relevance of eco-feminism in contemporary art is important because it explains and addresses that interconnectedness of all things, emphasising environmental issues and questions of identity. Artists help to explore the meanings behind human and more-than-human communities, including worlds of materiality, bringing a magical quality to ways of preserving things. Artist Berlinde de Bruyckere said upon talking on her work 'NEED' "so often I find beautiful things to think about and translate into work" (*ARTtube*, 2015) emphasising how those with an artistic mind sees the world.

Natural materials within art also have great value today, not only for offering more sustainable practices but growing roots, helping to understand the process and infusions of art. Raising questions on how our throw away culture can be redirected.

The notions of magic and surrealism offer us that sense of ritual meaning given to objects or practice, a gesture, a gift, an idea. Power is a fickle thing, in a feministic and artistic context, they appear to be one and the same, like passing on a piece of your ember in that empowering way, to play with power and not feel a need to control it but share. Empowering yourself and others is free, to show kindness, to share feelings and thoughts leads to understanding and a confidence to be yourself and be at ease with who you are, which does not always come as second nature.

The intersection of these titles, eco-feminism, natural materials, magic and empowerment is phenomenal, inviting questions and investigative work into our natural world and how we present ourselves in it. Rich in symbolism, meaning, rituals, folklore, storytelling, tradition, to material matters and observation. Furthermore, how we connect to other humans or more-than-human beings, creating powerful energy filled frameworks, to explore long winding paths within contemporary arts. This passage of writing is autoethnographic in its

nature and intends to help others connect and weave into existence their own magic of being.

Section 1: Eco-feminism in Contemporary Art

“It is all the more tantalising to feminists, working to understand where nature got separated from culture and how women became associated with an inferior natural line.”

(Sutcliffe, 2021. p41)

This quote highlights the research and depth of process to which eco-feminism has gone through to acknowledge world issues and to further understand how to bring about change. There is law, theory and art to everything in this world, it might be a law of chaos or physics, wave theory, the eye of the beholder or the golden ratio. All of which creates divides and awe in people and civilisations.

Core elements of eco-feminism are the interwoven connection of women and nature, creating feelings of sacred spaces, like the breath you breathe, when you forget how amazing it is that we can just breathe, in and out, repeatably for a whole entire lifetime.

Patriarchal and capitalist exploitations take more than is needed, leading to great implications of consumerism. Views such as seeing both women and nature as objectives and as value that can be extracted explored in depth by key theorist Vandana Shiva in her book ‘Staying alive, woman, ecology and development’ (1988). Eco-feminism connects world issues with sharp factual viewpoints and elevates the voices of women in environmental matters, after reading books like ‘Save Our Planet’ (2021) and ‘Arts Of Living On A Damaged Planet’ (2017) it is a common theme that male scientists only cite male scientists, this feels archaic. Creating resistance to ecological and gender oppression, the idea that women being close to nature has led to the oppression of both. Thoughts of futures like the dystopian drama, *The Handmaidens Tale* (2017) comes to mind, a horrifying tale indeed.

Further key theorists like Carolyn Merchant's publication of *"The Death Of Nature"* (1990) becoming one of the most influential books of the 80s, highlighting environmental action, ecofeminism and the merger of the sciences with feminist ideas, influencing thought and process in costs and rights. Merchant became known as a founder of early radical eco-feminism, encouraging women to act in the name of change. Donna Haraway has been an influence to many, hearing her name whispered in books of witchcraft such as *"A Witches Bible"* (Farrar and Farrar, 1996), her work bridges over philosophy, cultural theory and biology such as "human - animal, animal - machine, mind - body, male - female, fiction-nonfiction, nature - culture, science- society" (Nasrullah Mambrol, 2018).

The Anthropocene is a pivotal moment in earth's history talking of "Where human activities have become so dominant that they are now a planetary force" (Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing et al. 2017, p67). Decaying particles located in sedimentary rock and soil, a rhizome of human impact and geological process that can't be unseen. Implying that as we confront the consequences of our choices, we encounter haunting outcomes as we linger on the edge of irrevocable change.

Research has found similar themes emerging and its one of monsters, the carnage that we can never seem to escape. There are many outlets of contemporary art and surrealism in notions such as these, no one is beyond their monster, the ghost you leave behind or the footprint. What you feed is what grows, encouraging personal notions of wildwomen archetypes. Outcomes being subjective and unique to each mind or eco system. Sarah Clegg in her book *'Women's Lore'* (2023) stated with fondness to re-defining the whole concept of what it means to be monstrous.

If you'll be painted as a monster no matter what, you might as well make your own choices, and take control of your own destiny, rather than attempting to mould yourself to a contradictory ideal of womanhood that can be taken away no matter what you do. As symbols of 'unacceptable' women, Lilith and our demons are symbols of us all. (Clegg, 2023. P238)

Statements are made also about the very making of our world such as "life has been monstrous from the beginning. In ancient times, prokaryotes (bacteria and archaea) gave birth to monsters in which one organism engulfs another" (Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing et al., 2017. P.m5), asking us to examine, fascination and horror of symbiotic entanglement. Robert Macfarlane also refers to ghosts, monsters and angels in his book "Is A River Alive" (2025).

what is your demon, the creature in which you feel most affinity? He considers my question in silence for several paces, then reply's "I would choose three and not one, first the millepede, the millepede is a re-caster of meaning and matter you know, it turns the shit of life into something valuable, takes it in, exorb's its harm and turns death into life, waste into compost, endings into beginnings. Its a detritivore an underappreciated group of species that do this vital ethical work. (Macfarlane, 2025. p121)

Taking on these abilities of our seemingly demonic or monstrous world dwellers, offers us ways to carry on, ways of being, enhancing our imaginative domain, helping us to further understand different realms within our world.

Eco-warrior is a term I use fondly; it is not just females that are a part of a growing community striving to safeguard nature and find identity. A lecturer of mine stated, "can't be an artist without being a feminist" (*Duncan, 2025*) it seemed a small comment within conversation, steeped in truth. Equality is so important not only between men and women, but humans and nature. Why is there such divide and disconnection, are we parasitic in our nature. Overviewing our planet, we can see how everything comes from somewhere, everything has a natural source. Raw forms can be lucrative and exploited with no care left behind for sacred values, value is put on washed away treasure from different times to analysis, why less care to origin form.

Cosmo Sheldrake is truly inspired by nature in an artistic way, creating wonderfully weird musical worlds. A multi-instrumentalist musician, producer, composer, and ecological sound artist. Showing true connection and collaboration in song, performing with birds in a forest to performances in pig pens. He marvels at nature's reaction to music and to human collaboration, he is a true eco-warrior as well as a great supporter of eco-feminism. He highlights the importance of empowerment through connection, whatever we are.

Merlin Sheldrake is also a contributor to understanding the natural world, being a biologist and award-winning writer of 'Entangled Life' (2020), who has uncovered great knowledge of the wonderful world of fungi and its valuable place in the world's essential webs of life. Their parents being pianists and biologists themselves, one can see a cycle that has a dizzying infectious spread, one person inspiring the other down through generations, passed on.

Considering messages being passed on, the art of activism comes to mind, referring to artistic expression to promote change and awareness. For anyone that feels unheard, a simple gesture or non-violent stance, in the right location can go a very long way. Eco-feminist ideas influence current art practices by peaceful but intrusive interaction within society and nature, changing perspectives with visuals, a quiet kind of activism that speaks a thousand words.

Ancient ritual sites can hold great meaning too, like the site of the Roman Baths in Somerset. People came from all over to worship the Goddess Sulis Minerva and to bathe in the healing waters of the natural thermal spring, still flowing hot to this day. The springs beginning comes from rainfall on the Mendip hills, percolating through limestone aquifers. Being a historic site it attracts thousands, even though getting in the water has been discouraged since 1978 when deathly pathogens began to emerge, tying it to pollution of our waters.

The baths were turned into a site of protest by the group Extinction Rebellion in 2019, where 2 protesters entered the water, holding white roses and continued to float in peaceful protest for 45 minutes. The white rose was to symbolise purity, respect, remembrance, new beginnings and spirituality. This stance felt very potent and fuelled with peaceful urgency in our journey towards extinction.



Fig 4

Eco-feminism can be forms of getting involved and doing what you can. Whilst attending a university lecture on sustainability (though they were only a team of two) the impact seemed exciting, we were asked for ideas and views on what could be gained though acting as a community, like second hand stores for art and design students. Furthering our knowledge of how we can better use systems put in place to help our environment, acknowledging the cross-over of natural materials and how recycling is within our power. In fig 5 we see Bharti Kher's work 'Sky Walker' (2013) coming to mind for its elements of found and collected materials and embodiment of all things feminine. Taking themes of Tibetan mythology, the sky walkers are manifestations of energy and truth.



Fig 5.

Kiki Smith's work has deeply resonated over time, creations such as *women kneeling on pyre* (2001) and evocations of surrealist mood throughout. Smith's multidimensional art practice is steeped in folklore and feminism. Her work shown in fig 6 '*Spinners*' (2014) is a beautiful cotton jacquard tapestry, towering overhead, we receive feelings of cold crisp winter days, beauty in chaos, notions of hard worlds, intricate in design, only inviting because there is warmth to go back to.



Fig 6. Kiki smith – *Spinners* 2014

Section 2: Natural Materials as a Medium of Resistance, Healing and feminist strategy.

We are bleeding at the roots, because we are cut off from the earth and sun and stars, and love is a grinning mockery, because, poor blossom, we plucked it from its stem on the tree of Life and expected it to keep on blooming in our civilized vase on the table... Vitally, the human race is dying. It is like a great uprooted tree, with its roots in the air. We must plant ourselves again in the universe. (*Poetic Outlaws*, 2023)

Emphasizing the state of disconnect to our planet, and the energy of great change. Connection to the land creates equilibrium, it can help to ground us and calm our senses. Nature is a driving force, we channel it, take its characteristics and mannerisms as our own, mentally and physically, the means to be relentless, calm, enduring, rooted, ever changing but true, kind but deadly. The artist has a way of reclaiming agency through tactile, embodied practices encouraging healing with nature. Rekindling that connection to the earth, animating nature as a living, breathing thing, as Robert Macfarlane set out to do in his book 'Is A River Alive' (2025). He talks of rivers being the "veins of the earth", (*Macfarlane*, 2025,) advocating for rivers to have rights equal to humans. Doing his best to invoke action and change, he mentions "close to the Czech German boarder a drought stone emerges with an ancient warning 'if you see me... weep...'" (*Macfarlane*, 2025) emphasising need for that rekindled connection.

We use nature everyday, everything we have has had a natural beginning until we take it within our human hands and machines, manipulating it into new things. Raw materials work well in art contexts, showing how process can be important as well as the materiality of things being beautiful in their natural state. A material in its rawness speaks volumes, an

environment creates a rawness of beauty. The power of a bog and its abilities to preserve, telling ancient stories as if it was yesterday, immortalising anything that sinks below its surface, preserving bodies for generations reminding me of Manon Awsts work in her recent exhibition 'Coriso' (2025) (title chosen for its Welsh meaning to sink and stick) and her investigative work into its core values and her interactional process.

Eco-feminist thought can have impacted on material choices and themes within an artist's work. The idea of creating living art or thinking about what is left behind, raw material and waste materials to raise awareness. How we choose to interact with the world in an impactful way, materiality in nature feels pure and can create moving connotations in contemporary art.

Having deep connection with a landscape helps to see more lives than your own, the elements, making life possible. The more than human world, our habits and habitats are all connected. Our land is resilient it can sing songs of resistance and healing that is echoed in its people. The more-than-human is a term coined by David Abram in his book 'The spell of Sensuous' (1996). Created to shift narrative, requiring us to widen our lens to view more than the needs of humans. To shift perspective and acknowledge that "We are not the only kind of we" (Kohn, 2013, p16). In fig 7 we see Solange Pessoa's series Sonhiferas (2020-21) created for the more-than-human exhibit by the design museum, Pessoa's work takes on this morphosis of human, animal and vegetable, evoking fluid life in their swirling form.



Fig 7.

When the lands cut open things still grown, weeds sneak back and start the cycle again, creating a new cover of colour, fig 8 shows representation of this feeling. Inspiring many a land artist and painter alike, sculptor such as David Nash upon his first thoughts when moving to North Wales “how astonishing the rain was” (*Studio International*, 2023), Andy Goldsworth and his love of the lands weathering of art and Cecilia Vicunas use of wool and seeds. There are many ways of using natural materials within art and its unique to each creator, natural materials challenge industrial art norms by not inviting commercial thought and processes, being sustainable and kinder to earth, making it priceless and promoting richer qualities of life.



Fig 8

Monet was one of the first artists to paint outside in the open, his *Nymphéas (Waterlilies)* painted in oils in the 1890's, sit in the orangery in Paris. Filling 2 oval shaped rooms, they are a sight to see, his spirit must have soured while he painted, soaking in and immortalising every glimpse of light and depth in the water's shades and reflection.



Fig 9

Many people find themselves drawn to water or elements of nature, documentary presenter David Malone tells us, "Waves are about transformation of energy and so are people" (*The Secret Life of Waves, 2016*), this is profound in helping us to understand the connection and recognition there. Ingrid Meucci's underwater photography comes to mind shown in fig 10, capturing underwater moments, for you to hold and treasure. This photo caught my attention for triggering that connection to water but also for the story of healing that came from creating these images with the model that was healing from cancer.



Fig 10

There is great depth in material, exploring new mediums and their properties, helps in seeking symbols of connection, mixing of different quality's and invokes wisdom in deep thought, weaving with willow is when I do my best thinking. Musing on further symbolism within natural materials, thoughts of fertility and rebirth, strength and healing, cycles, time, feminine connection and otherworldly themes emerge. Our world is rich in inspiration, and you will always find something new and exciting to learn about it. There is research going into sustainable development with natural materials such as seaweed, mycelium, 'the mother' in cider vinegar. Bio-matter is both abundant and sustainable, putting greater power in trade, trading one skill for another, providing less need of larger scale transporting of goods.

There is great pleasure in grown materials, being part of the whole process, understanding it. Willow for instance as an art material is very supple and healing to work with, used for charcoal or woven forms. It also contains the healing properties of aspirin in its bark; its

smell is amazing. Appreciating the hard graft of growing, cutting, grading, storing, using and not wasting anything makes the feeling of making even more special somehow. Nostalgic feelings arise here and a tradition begins, willow needs wet land to flourish but will grow just about anywhere, there is something very melancholy about working outside in winter to see the orange glow of the home barn and the smell of wood smoke reassuring warmth, waiting for you to finish your task.

Weavers, grow European willow that is better for baskets and sculpture, not like the native willows of our country that are harder and wilder but still very much usable along with other wild material like natural cord such as bramble, nettle, reeds, bark. Willows seem to thrive off human interference, growing faster and stronger each year, showing that humans can be part of the system of regrowth. In the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Kimmer (2013), feminism, ecology and indigenous culture is explored, where experiments have been carried out on sweetgrass in terms of how they thrive, giving scientific data to back up indigenous wisdom. Coming to conclusions that “if we use a plant respectfully it will stay with us and flourish and if not, it will go away” (Kimmerer, 2013). The indigenous wisdom of this book has solidified and encouraged my practice in learning about culture and how you can be worlds away but see the same beauty in the land that lies around you, having respect from what is taken, everything has a purpose, nothing goes to waste. Even scraps have use for lighting fires then giving that ash back to the trees.

Basket weaving in contemporary art, takes on new dimensions. Pushing through traditional concepts and seeing what else can be achieved, by incorporating unconventional materials and experimenting with scale and form. Changing tradition to keep it alive, rooting the past in the present, in Fig 11 Matt Tommey shows the endless possibilities with what can be

done with natural materials and a creative spirit, Laura Ellen Bacons willow works also come to mind.



Fig 11

Here I find symbiosis of art and the living world, ecology and storytelling, a touch of magic on a cold night and the fear of living subsides. Be alive, be rugged and real and sometimes do not think like a human. Perhaps it is through seeking identity we struggled, there are many ways of being, explore them. Lines between realism and escapism blur, being human is hard, so find better ways to see. Let nature absorb you.

Nature teaches us nothing is permanent, the more you look the more you find. Connection to land and place, can grow deeply, astonishing roots. Starting off small and young thinking that the trees were only there for us to look at, a naive child. Growing up to realise everything has a way, adapting, living, reaching for the sun. Mast years for instance is a phenomenon of trees and how they not only communicate, they increase their fruit yield every 4/5 years when there are high populations of squirrels and other eaters of fruit and nuts. They try to out-fruit the eaters so some saplings might win and enjoy the right to grow, these kinds of years make fermenters very happy, we experienced one in this year, 2025.

It is empowering to learn of what our land is capable of, where your feet walk and make your world a little bigger as you do so. The immersive feeling that's found here feels profound. Where we can find better ways of harmonious living, empowerment usually follows such notions, connection to land and heritage, bodily autonomy, wisdom and ways to keep us humble. Nature keeps us in the present in her interwoven web of life, leave only memories with her.

Abundance is depicted in art frequently; be it tapestries of old or fruit bowls in pop art colours. Seen in fig 12, 'The lady and the unicorn' are a set of six tapestry's woven around the 1500's, representing the six senses inspiring intrigue across nations, the "tapestries are

characterized by an abundance of Funa and Flora, and inhabitance by bestiary painting
idyllic natural setting conducive to contemplation” (www.musee-moyenage.fr, n.d.)



Fig 12.

Section 3: the role of magic and ritual in artistic practice

“The ultimate job of an artist is as an alchemist, someone who can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, see myriad possibilities in a single medium and show us something we instantly recognise, despite never having witnessed it before.” (*The Great Women Artists*, 153 - Bharti Kher, 2025)

Katy Hessel speaks of the mystical characteristics of the surreal and the magic of the alchemy that's inside, shaping our art, drawing from our life, our dreams and the world around. The role of a spiritual sense is seen widely through art and expression. It is always there but given different titles, that sense of magic, a wave or energy, a driving force or even a divine form. In viewing ritual practice in the world you begin to see how religions, cults and movements have formed, how giving meaning and tradition is a way of creating, we communicate these feelings throughout time, how they connect in ripples and whispers past down in stone or scraps of battered objects or ancient worlds transcribed from old words, to the feeling that makes us sing and dance.

Witchcraft traditionally is the “invocation of supernatural powers to control people and events” (*White*, 2016). Having different forms from harmful and the satanic, delving into the world of sacrifice, human darkness and strength in cults and secret numbers. To scared citizens and leaderships having women put to death for cavorting with the devil around 500 years ago. But in truth, with a magical sense or not theses where just women, condemned to death sometimes for just being a widow with land that a man wanted.

Goddess symbolism such as Hecate is a multifaced goddess depicting the mother, the maiden and the crown, in Greek mythology's she is associated with magic, witchcraft, the

moon and the underworld, normally depicted holding torches and keys. Often artists feel inspired and intrigued by her myths to show depictions of her stories as she is portrayed to be a strong women figure in pagan communities, along with other inspiring mythologies creatures like the Green Man or the Mari Lwyd. In my own way I don't feel a need to follow a deity or goddess but search for their stories hungrily.

Druids believed there is energy in everything and that energy exchanges, Indigenous culture builds deep connections to land and being one with your environment, it is strange how all these different beliefs feel alike, many of the same values but different ritual expressions, tellings of how our world is special, sacred and cherished. In the end it is the magic that you see what makes your ember ignite that builds passion, wisdom and mixes it in rich alchemy.

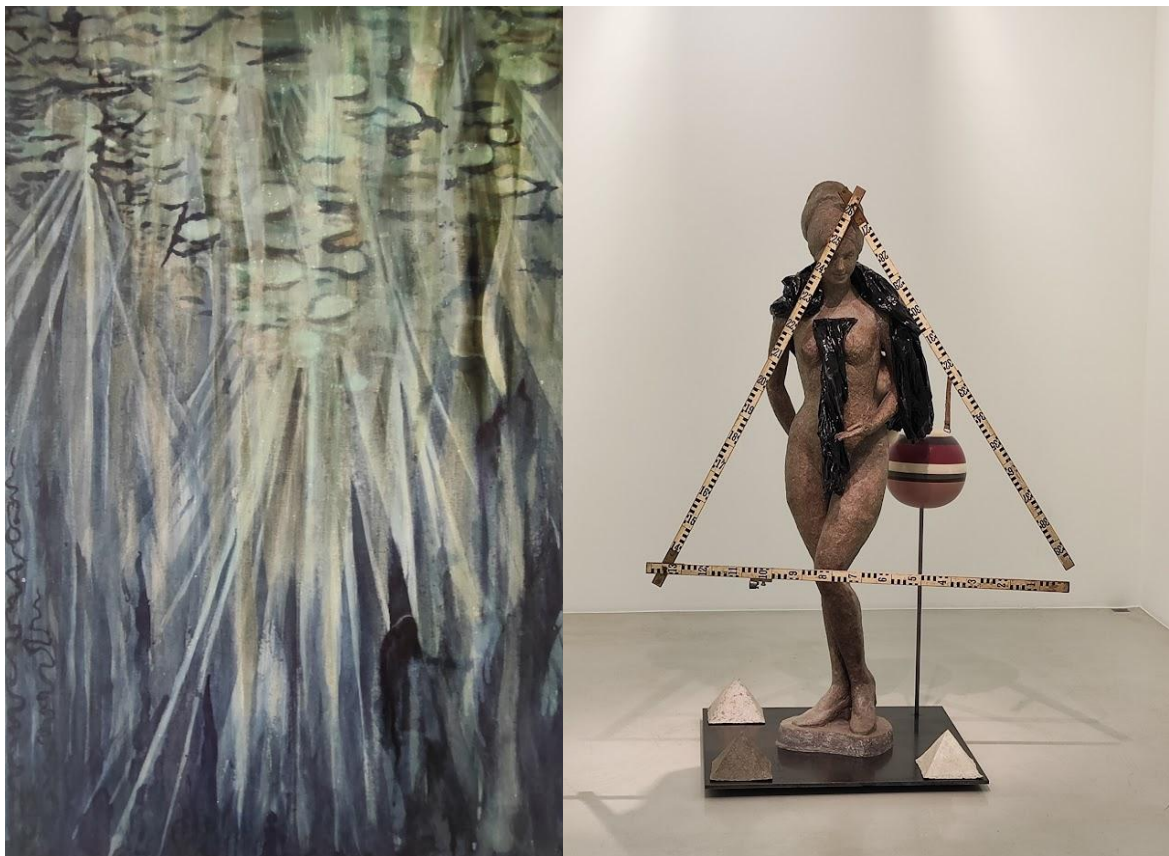


Fig 13 & 14

Alchemy, finding fondness and recognition in this terminology, thoughts of making inks out of natural matter and the alchemic qualities that are enacted there. Not being a scientist but experimenting with nature, creating with its colours be it natural dye or making ink. The way in which the natural inks shift in shade, colour and how over time dulling in their vibrancy, shifting again to more neutral tones, being as nature itself is untameable yet willing to comply (Fig 13). Bharti Kher's created an exhibition named *Alchemies* (2024) in the Yorkshire sculpture park, using found and deceiving materials she creates effortlessly elegant forms sometimes taking dark or playful notes. Her cultural figures were cast from people the artist knows, she invites us to see them as found objects too, as they take on Hindu mythology's. The figure of the Alchemist seen in Fig 14, "modelled in paper mache made from the pulp of old art magazines" (Kher, 2024, p84), appears as stone, newly made but old looking, a powerful trickery. In another exhibition viewed in Paris "sun splitting stones" the same Alchemist is displayed showing how her alchemy evolves and has cross over in all aspects of Kher's work perhaps taking on a kind of self-portrait, she is the alchemist, the creator and her studio is a lab, she draws on science, history, engineering and spiritualism, exploring materiality and how things can change often braking things and braking them again before they seem fit for the work. Bharti Kher in exhibit 'sun splitting stone' displayed big surrealist paintings 'the weather paintings' shown in Fig 15 relating "to the power and potential of that which is felt but not seen" (Perrotin.com, 2025).

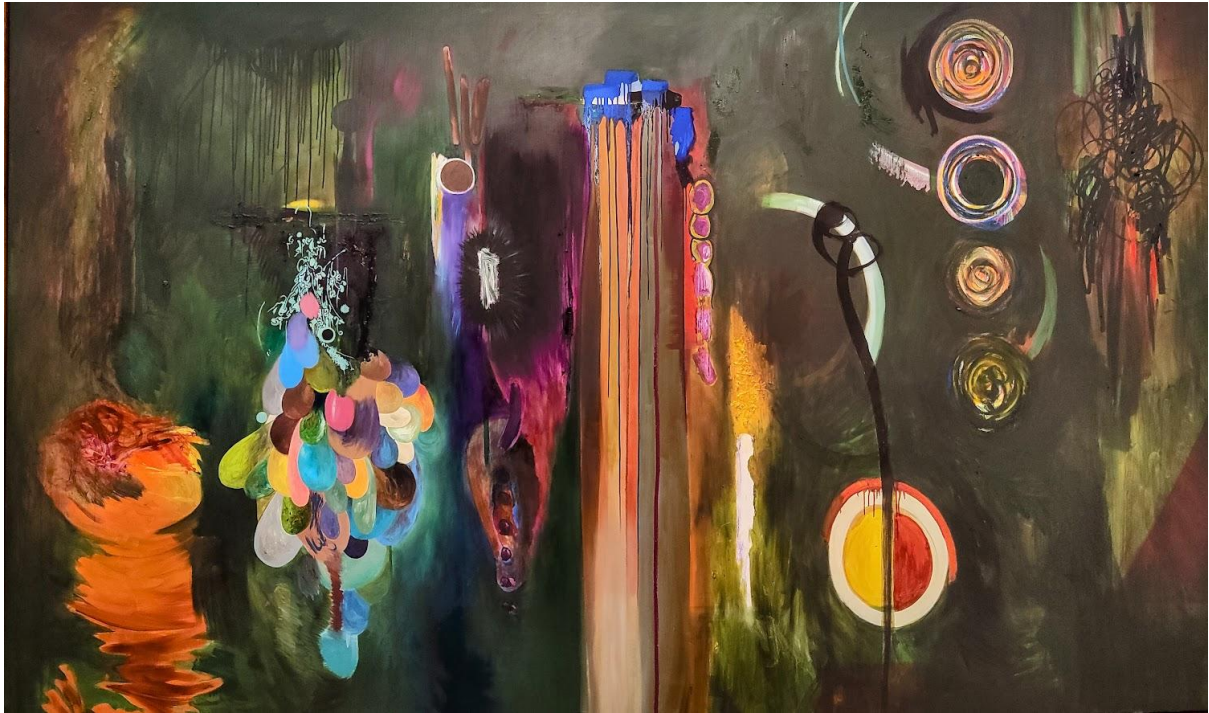


Fig 15.

Surrealism is a 20th century avant-garde movement that struggled with male elitism in its time. Being inspired by paintings such as 'Nephesh as the soul in a state of sleep' (1959) by Carrington and 'Attributes to the moon' (1947) by Colquhoun, the sense of movement and slightly hazy ethereality of the unconscious sending a message to be decoded. The encouragement to try to understand the uncanny, sieve through the unconscious parts of yourself to perhaps make sense of your creative flow is a true drive and one worth understanding. Another example of masterful surrealism, 'The belladonna of sadness' (1972) directed by Eiichi Yamamoto, which explores feminism, witchcraft and beauty as an invitation for abuse. While portraying a sensory surreal flow in watercolour and the enduring nature of experience.

In the book 'Science and art of dreaming' (2023) Lockheart states that dreams are a "creative series of images that can fascinate us all, and intrigue and inspire creative practitioners" (*Blagrove and Lockheart, 2023. p1*). Which they have done for all our human years from Obama declaring "I had a dream" (1963), to Sigmund Freud and his lifetimes work on the subject "We are what we are because we have been where we have been." (*Sigmund Freud, 2018. P25.*), our dreams shape us all in some way.

My core being wants to explore, creative connections to dreams from lucid dreaming, dreamless sleeps and the emotional nonsensical worlds they create. Still to this day I puzzle over a dream, of being on an expansive beach, the tide out, wind all around, dramatic castle in the distance, having flown there, hearing calls of someone in the distance, and while holding a distorted shell. The fragments of this dream stay close and inspire in me notions to keep moving, never knowing what's out there.

Surrealism intends to capture the creative potential of the unconscious mind, painting the way for things like automatic painting and spontaneous art, where you allow your subconscious to guide you in your creation. Tia Meria Taylor Berry is a good example of this, specialising in geometric abstraction, "employing the use of mediumistic techniques such as automatic drawing, seance and divination, the work is created through an experienced shift in state of being." (*Taylor, 2025*)

Otherworldly creators living in-between their real world and their own worlds of wonder such as the illustrator Brian Fraud and his world of fae folk, like a dream blinking back and forth between realms, wondering perhaps ever closer to the underlying chaos of the oneiric and further away from the real "We believe the dream is real while it occurs, and we are part of it" (*Blagrove and Lockheart, 2023, p4*) this also brings to mind the works of

surrealist painter Malene Laugesen, creating this otherworld that looks so inviting we instinctively want to be a part of it.



Fig 16

The moment we catch a happening is potent because its caught and it would have happened with or without you. The energy of the wind and the warmth of the sun on your skin, to the clouds and the shapes you can name there, starlings and their murmuration's. The magic of knowing or the mystery of not, the magic we are capable of when we are fuelled with the energy of this world is overwhelming, it is worth protecting. To understand the elements of yourself that may be hard to explain is powerful, to explore where your energy comes from and let it loose in artistic expression, to translate the world into art.

Section 4: challenges and critiques

“Science isn’t an exercise in cold-blooded rationality. Scientists are and have always been emotional, creative, intuitive, whole human beings, asking questions about a world that was never made to be catalogued and systematized.” (*Sheldrake, 2020, p13*)

This quote is added to the effect of how we are only people navigating life in every way.

Finding ways to engage and keep people's interest has become increasingly difficult brought on further by decreasing attention spans. Finding challenge in the 30 second rule theory, designed to increase productiveness and creativity, this theory can be applied to conversation or daily tasks translating into if you have not engaged someone in 30 seconds you will not, or if it takes more than 30 seconds to do a task you are more than likely not going to do it. This ideology feels like laziness or encourages a lesser quality of life, but does it have merit in perhaps other areas of working out how to engage people quickly or giving time for other meaningful connections. Kae Tempest in her book ‘On Connections’ said it best “when we are forced to go without something, we begin to notice what it truly is, when we have it all the time, we have no need to tune in to its qualities” (*Kae Tempest, 2020*).

This rule seems further egged on by social media's quick reels, making it harder to build true connection and yet it is supposed to be all about connecting to the world. Struggling with thought trails of technologies such as smart phones and how you need them to better interact with the world, making for easier travel, boarding passes on phones, apps, translators, codes to scan for information or maps, no one asks strangers anymore for directions or help.

The theory of Schrodinger's cat, where a cat is sealed in a box, is it considered both alive and dead until observed. Considering contexts in art, is it there if we have not viewed it into being? As a species we love to create even when it is not seen, so does it matter if your art has been seen, critiqued or viewed. Does its value grow the more who have seen and connected to it or is it just as valuable in its mystery or just for what it means to you, everything is either a subjective or an objective.

Creating roots feels important but notions of spreading your wings to weights heavy, can we do both all at once, time is valuable and sieves through our hands like sand. Is our magic, healing world, and eco-warrior spirit enough to slow the clock to perhaps leave a world better than we found it. In fig 17 we can see the phases of the moon symbolising time; hares are known to be wise and fast runners with decorative patterns of flora, while the gold background highlights the importance of this message that time is precious, use it wisely.



Fig 17.

Section 5: Intersection and Conclusion

In the essay of Rejected Knowledge by Gary Lachman (2015) it is said “spirits were woven together into subtle webs of relations, where each echoed the other in some mysterious way. In ancient times, this was known as ‘The sympathy of all things’, the anima mundi, or ‘soul of the world’. (Sutcliffe, 2021, p30)

This quote is chosen for its focus on the interwoven web that connects us all. Synthesis of natural materials, magical aesthetics and a mothering sense to protect, have found connection in equilibrium, finding balance with life, the world and outlets of art. It is the sum of our parts that make us whole, the connections we build and what we nurture, the life we live and what we choose to stand for. Pulling them apart to analyse separately becomes a challenge, which feels massive that such small things can have impact even when they feel like nothing, it means everything.

Empowering frameworks emerge in all sections, coming again to the symbiotic connection to making with the living world, such as art activism, land art, healing and a sense of community, engaging others in love and learning. Eco-feminism encourages us to love without judgement, care for all living things and speak outwardly. Natural materials show us how to interact, tune in and apply healthier ways of being. While magic is the key to igniting our souls and creating our own individual language, ritual and unique ways of sharing.

The power of visual language also has a universal effect, we all understand an image, from the first cave paintings creating film in flickering firelight, to the emojis we communicate with today, crossing language barriers, sometimes even in barriers of species. In fig 18 we view a “piece inspired by evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis's theory of coevolution and symbiogenesis, Margulis's etching shows a lively interplay of five kingdoms: plants, fungi,

animals, and protests all radiate from bacteria's." (Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing et al., 2017, p, m5) giving us a visual representation of how our world intertwines and although chaotic there is beauty and balance in the imperfect mess of things.



Fig 18.

To summarise, this thesis has looked at the eco-feminist movement, natural materials as art, magic within artistic practice, dismantling them separately and considered the connected whole. It has then gone on to consider the challenges encountered, coming to conclusions of subjectivity and entanglement. In the way it's viewed, the thoughts between the creator of the art and the viewer. You may see some of its meaning but there is always so much more, even growing in meaning as its parts are creations and the similarity's we see growing out in the world. Every eye is unique.

Sit and watch the world, just for an hour, watch the clouds on a windy day, the dappled light through trees, a fire eating hungrily in the night, waves lapping on the shore. Collectively we should plant trees to grow even if they will not mature in our lifetime, we should let the wild back in, the trick is to live. Let your artist instinct wonder and your desires guide you in a poetic dance. The thoughts between the creator of art and the viewer is the recognition and alchemy at play almost like bewitchment. It is an empowering tool to create messages and share, offering experiences with nature to perhaps learn to appreciate her values more than when you started.

“Wisdom, Happiness, and Courage are not waiting somewhere out beyond sight at the end of a straight line; they're part of a continuous cycle that begins right here. They're not only the ending, but the beginning as well.” (*Hoff, 1982*)

Encouraging us to keep searching and exploring, not only endings but beginnings nothing is as straight forward as it seems but there is beauty, ritual and discovery in walking the path.

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