

The idea for *Amidst All This: A Eulogy for the Earth* stems from two articles, one about desperate digging for cobalt in the Congo, and the other about kids growing up watching their native landscapes thrown into chaos by climate change. In both, the face of the earth was filled with desire and loss.

The project will manifest in three forms: an original devised theatrical performance, an immersive experience utilizing mixed reality, and a traveling workshop wherein community members engage in an embodied exploration of the performance themes. I will direct and compose the ensemble performance and project.

The early devising ensemble will include my Case Western Reserve colleagues in Religion, Geology, Bio-Ethics, and Mixed Reality. This interdisciplinary collaboration acts as antidote to drastic reduction in government support for creative research and siloed departments in higher education.

The piece will span ideas of international and environmental import, as it grapples with the competition over diminishing resources, childhoods lived amidst the sweeping destruction of natural disaster, and the universal struggle to survive, and will ask the question, How can we be present with the natural world as we witness its transformation and accept our role in its destruction?

I believe the heart of the response is located in physical engagement with tangible objects and elements, the immediate and intimate experience of working with materials such as buckets, shovels, dirt, and stones. We will use these materials to embody larger-than-life environmental disasters as well as human-made destruction. When humans work with materials such as creaky wood, flapping paper, and bags of shells, they can make the sounds of water, and of storm. As they physically engage with these objects, they generate compelling moments of visual and aural poetry. Song, dance, and dynamic theatrical moments emerge, and the result is a form of theater which immerses the audience in a multi-sensory experience of nature and a witnessing of aliveness and presence.

In this hand-made performance, residing at the meeting ground of spiritual practice and creative expression, the performers will embody both the storm and the human experience of the storm; will identify as the world, the power, while also embodying the experiencer, the subject, the human whose world is in chaos. This dual identification allows us—performers and audience alike, through the alchemy of theatre—to expand into some kind of awakening. This locates the body as the site of transformation.

As we sit and breathe together in the dark of the theatre, we make room for the nervous system to resonate with both the level of loss and destruction and the potential for uplifted survival, and it is here where the relevancy of theatre lives. This performance, this ceremony of materials will offer an embodied natural experience, a sense of belonging, to performers and witnesses alike, and through it we will uncover that we the people do have the capacity for presence. As with a potent eulogy, we will grieve, celebrate, and connect.
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