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Ecopoiesis is a peer-reviewed, open access, quarterly journal publishing the best in eco-poetry and eco-poetics, ecocritical theory and ecocriticism, ecopsychology and ecotherapy, eco-philosophy and eco-ethics, eco-art and eco-music, eco-pedagogy and eco-praxis, eco-politics and eco-activism, eco-fiction and eco-drama, eco-creative writing and eco-criticism, and other ecocentric or green approaches to language, literature and the arts.

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McHugh, Christopher: CORRESPONDING WITH JEJU SCIURU: EXPLORING THE (RE)GENERATIVE QUALITIES OF STONE

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CORRESPONDING WITH JEJU SCIURU: EXPLORING THE (RE)GENERATIVE QUALITIES OF STONE

This is an updated version of the original article which was first published on McHugh, C. (2020). Corresponding with Jeju Sciuru: A Stone Poem. Ecopoiesis, 1, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.26710/ecopoiesis.1.1.2020.1.1

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Abstract

The author was one of 13 artists invited to participate as an artist-in-residence programme organised by City Art and supported by the Jeju Culture and Art Foundation. The project was to be held on Jeju island, South Korea, and was to culminate in a sculpture being placed in the city of Jeju as part of the Jeju Biennale. However, the Biennale was cancelled because of the virus. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the residency was cancelled. Instead, participants were sent a small quantity of stone to work with in their respective countries.

In this paper, the author reflects on the challenges of conducting an artist residency, weighing up that while this mode of working poses challenges, particularly in terms of access to authentic connections with place, it also provides an opportunity to explore new modes of artistic practice. Drawing on a site-specific project, mediated via an Instant Insert Kit (a portable research kit), the author discusses conducted remotely by correspondence through emails and the postal service. The paper documents the author's engagement with the stone and the correspondence with Jeju Sciuru, a local artist. The process of engaging in correspondence has further correspondence between the author and place, both art-based in a process of discovery. Rather than existing in stasis, the stone is presented as a (re)generative agent, the author and Jeju Sciuru having to consider the implications of being unexpectedly bonded and yet they are in a constant process of becoming.

Keywords: Recovering, ceramic, correspondence, clay, Jeju island, Korea, stone, pandemic, volcanic stone

Dr Christopher McHugh

Introduction

I first heard of Jeju island when I was teaching English in Osaka, Japan, in 1996. One of my students told me of how she and her husband had honeymooned there in the early 1990s. At that time, Jeju was a popular destination for Japanese travellers seeking short breaks in a relatively accessible, yet exotic, environment. Jeju is a volcanic island, formed by lava flows and ash falls, and is, relatively speaking, very small. Jeju measures around 70 million years old and is a normal year, many flying there from the Korean mainland and Asia. When I was invited to participate in an artists residency on Jeju island, my instinctive response was, I have never been to Jeju island, but I know it is a place of beauty and wonder and the kindness of the community. Having undertaken other residencies, in the UK and Japan, I knew that a site-specific artistic format and was keen to develop upon the approaches I had developed during previous residencies.

These expectations were considerably modified due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Correspondence with the organisers indicated that the residency would be held when borders had been reopened and quarantine was neither required nor enforced, which was a relief for the participant cameras. The so-called 'new normal', has meant that the residency was conducted by correspondence. While this mode of working poses challenges, particularly in terms of access to authentic contexts and sensorial stimulation, it also provides an opportunity to explore new modes of artistic practice. Drawing on a site-specific project, mediated via an Instant Insert Kit (a portable research experience of being in the place, it offered a chance to consider how this working mode might be a useful mode of making in the post-coronavirus Anthropocene. With England, and most other nations of the world, still in the grip of the coronavirus, this paper documents the author's engagement with the stone and the correspondence with Jeju Sciuru, a local artist, which has further correspondence between place and artist. The pandemic has been described as a time of revelation, a time of reset, a time of reflection, a time of rest, a time of reset, a time of reset, a time of reset, a time of reset, a time of grounding, where we are forced to slow down and reflect on our lives. The pandemic has been something also to what ecologist of alone Jeffery Cohen (4, p. 20) describes as a 'cross-ontological disaster', a time when we are forced to stay apart from those we love, a time when we are forced to stay in our homes, a time when we are forced to stay in our homes, a time when we are forced to stay in our homes

Figure 11. Hexagon-shaped piece made using a cardboard mould.

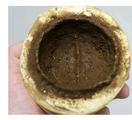

Figure 12. Scoria mixed with water and thick underglaze medium and shaped in a molochite and plaster mould.

Figure 13. Mark-making and hand-modelling.

Figure 14. After firing, showing shrinkage.

Figure 15. Finished piece showing hexagon design.

Figure 16. Detail of vessel in Figure 15.

Figure 17. This piece was initially fired to 1260°C and then re-fired to 1280°C, sagging as a result.

Figure 18. Detail of interior of vessel in Figure 17.

Figure 19. This vessel was fired to 1260°C. Areas which touched the plaster mould have a lighter red colour than the interior.

Figure 20. Detail of vessel in Figure 19.

Figure 21. This vessel was fired straight up to 1280°C. Shrinkage was about 24%.

Figure 22. Detail of vessel in Figure 21.

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About the journal

"Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice" is the first international multidisciplinary journal focused on building an eco-human paradigm, disseminating eco-human knowledge and technology based on the alliance of ecology, humanities and the arts. Our journal aims to be a vibrant forum of theories and practices aimed at harmonizing the relations of mankind and the natural world in the interests of sustainable development, the creation of Eco-Humanity as a new community of human beings and more-than-human world. The human being is an ecological being, not separate from the world. The Ecopoiesis journal is based on that premise and aims to develop a body of theory and practice within that framework.

The journal promotes dialogue and cooperation between ecologists, philosophers, doctors, educators, psychologists, artists, musicians, designers, social activists, business representatives in the name of eco-human values, human health and well-being, in close connection with concern for the environment. The journal supports the development and implementation of new environmentally-friendly concepts, technologies and practices in the various fields of health and public life, education and social work.

One of the priority tasks of the journal is to demonstrate and support the significant role of the arts in their alliance with ecology and the humanities for the restoration and development of constructive relations with nature, raising environmental awareness and promoting nature-friendly lifestyles.

The journal publishes articles describing new eco-human concepts and practices, technologies and applied research data at the intersection of humanities, ecology and the arts, as well as interviews and conference reports related to the emerging eco-human field. It encourages artwork, music and other creative products related to eco-human practices and the new global community of Eco-Humanity.

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