

Within and beyond ‘The Field’- artful entanglements with each other and what matters

Sheridan Linnell
Western Sydney University, Australia

Jill Westwood
Goldsmiths, University of London

...the touch of entangled beings (be)coming together/apart... (Karen Barad, 2012)



Figs 1 & 3, Photographs by Anita Lever; Fig. 2, Photograph by Jill Westwood

Westwood and Linnell trace the arc of an ongoing inquiry, in collaboration with other human and non-human actors, from their 2007 exhibition with Suzanne Perry and Josephine Pretorius (see Linnell, Perry, Pretorius and Westwood, 2019) through to their current collaborations, together and apart. They note how the agency of materials and places becomes increasingly insistent in their work.

A key point of diffraction in this process was the 2016 installation with Anita Lever and Lesley Morris at Goldsmiths College, University of London: *Crossing the field: creating intra-active spaces through a participatory artists' event* (Lever, Linnell, Morris & Westwood, 2017; see also Lever, Linnell & Curtis, 2016; Linnell & Lever, 2017; Morris & Westwood, forthcoming). Provoked by the crisis of diasporas of displaced peoples searching the globe for refuge and the need for art therapists to find an ethical response to this, Westwood and Morris began to conceptualise a collaborative tent city spreading across the huge college field at Goldsmiths. Meanwhile, in Australia, Linnell and Lever were being moved by similar concerns with how the rising hysteria of the far right has infected mainstream politics in Australia (and elsewhere) and led to the brutal and inhumane treatment of asylum seekers in offshore detention. They proposed to erect a vast tent and project images onto it.

From this serendipitous and unintended parallel, an international collaboration was formed. The concept of the tent city rhizomatically grew and spread in the imaginations and practices of Westwood and Morris, extending to embrace and respond to emerging political and cultural events including the death of David Bowie, the emergence of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader (what happened there, folks?), and the (ir)resistible rise of neoliberalism within the institution. In Sydney, Lever and Linnell found themselves led, through an encounter with things collected in the present and memories recollected from their families and cultures of origin, to work with builders' plum-bobs, plum-lines and string into the negative spaces of, and counterpoint to, the tent city on the Field.

More recently, Westwood and Linnell have been working on a mutual project foregrounding decolonisation, and also working apart in separate collaborations in which personal losses are entangled with traumatic political and historical injustices. They have once more discovered the mysterious and sensible convergence of their passionate inquiries - as though they set out to work together in one way *and* have stumbled upon each other anew in the lost and found department of the post-human turn. In a presentation that foregrounds visual and poetic approaches, Linnell and Westwood ask where these intra-actions with each other, every-thing and every-body might lead; where they – and ‘we’ – might be led....

Sheridan Linnell is Associate Professor of Art Therapy and Discipline Leader for Arts Therapy and Counselling at Western Sydney University, Australia. Sheridan is committed to working with others to question and reshape professional and therapeutic discourse, counter marginalisation and move beyond individualistic accounts of wellbeing. She is interested in how contemporary art and new materialisms can destabilise the dominant theories and practices of (art) therapy. As a White woman whose family migrated to Australia in the early 1960s as ‘ten pound Poms’, Sheridan is engaged in ‘decolonising practices’ in collaboration with other non-Indigenous art therapists and First Nations colleagues. She co-edited (with Westwood and others) *Art therapy in Australia: taking a postcolonial, aesthetic turn* (Gilroy, Linnell, McKenna & Westwood, 2019). She is currently on research leave. This has allowed her to inquire further into the radical potential of new materialisms, postcolonial theories and Indigenous onto-epistemologies acting together/apart. Sheridan is a practicing poet and occasionally collaborates on exhibitions of performance and installation art.



Contact: s.linnell@westernsydney.edu.au

Dr Jill Westwood is an artist, researcher, HCPC registered Art Psychotherapist and Programme Convenor of the MA Art Psychotherapy, Goldsmiths, University of London. From 1995-2007 Jill was Course Co-ordinator/ Program Director of the MA Art Therapy and GD Expressive Therapies at Western Sydney University, Australia. Her art practice encompasses film, installation, and performance and is concerned with the emotional and relational aspects of human experience. This draws on and is influenced by her experience as an art psychotherapist-educator. Her research interests include art-based approaches and the interface between art therapy and contemporary art. While at Western Sydney University, Westwood undertook a critical and creative inquiry into the histories and practices of art therapy education in Australia and led a team of educators (including Linnell) in the development of an innovative arts-led pedagogy.



Contact: j.westwood@gold.ac.uk