



UNESCO Observatory  
Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in  
the Arts

Volume 6 | Issue 1 | 2020

# ***CREATING UTOPIA***

Imagining and Making Futures  
Art, Architecture and Sustainability

Lorne Sculpture Biennale Inaugural Conference 2018

Editor | Lindy Joubert

# UNESCO Observatory

## Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in the Arts

Volume 6 | Issue 1 | 2020

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### ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal that promotes multidisciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence. Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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ISSN 1835 - 2776

Published in Australia

Published by

The Graduate School of Education

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The University of Melbourne, Parkville,

Victoria 3010

### COVER IMAGE

Leon Walker

Photography at

The Lorne Sculpture

Biennale 2018

## EDITOR'S LETTER

The sixth Lorne Sculpture Biennale, March 2018, was a vibrant festival celebrating the best of Australian and international sculpture. The stunning Lorne foreshore became a picturesque pedestal for a curated landscape of sculptures, presented alongside an exciting program of events devoted to pressing global issues of nature and endangerment, under the distinguished curation and visionary direction of Lara Nicholls, curator at the NGA Canberra. The inaugural conference, *Creating Utopia Imagining and Making Futures: Art, Architecture and Sustainability* was held at Qdos Gallery, Lorne, as part of the Biennale's curatorial theme of 'Landfall, Nature + Humanity + Art'. Keynote and invited speakers – conservationists, visual artists, architects and academics – reflected on issues and processes of social and environmental degradation, transformation and regeneration. The presentations came from a diverse and thought-provoking range of viewpoints offering innovative, and well researched future directions to the world's mounting problems.

*Creating Utopia* examined the green revolution – greater than the industrial revolution and happening faster than the digital revolution. The speakers were introduced by the inimitable Design Professor, Chris Ryan, whose elegant and thoughtful comments to each presenter added a distinctive contribution. Mona Doctor-Pingel, an architect from Auroville, India delivered her keynote address, 'Journeying to Oneness through architecture in Auroville, South India', discussing the natural and built landscapes found in the unique, social utopia that is Auroville, with an emphasis on experimental building techniques using local materials and craft principles, inspired by biology. I would like to thank all the presenters for their valuable contributions and this issue, volume 6, issue 1 of the 'UNESCO journal, multi-disciplinary research in the arts' [www.unescoejournal.com](http://www.unescoejournal.com) is testament to their important research and life's work.

The conference was considered by all who attended to be a wonderful success. Inspired by the beautiful setting amidst the gum trees and singing birds surrounding the Qdos Gallery. Sincere thanks to all who attended, the excellent list of speakers, the team - Graeme Wilkie OAM for his overall, tireless support; Lara Nicholls the LSB curator for her helpful ideas and professionalism; Gillian Oliver for the superb food; Laurel Guymer, the behind the scenes angel of 'La Perouse' at Lorne who managed the bookings and accommodation and our diligent rapporteur, Jeremy Laing. The excellent Deakin intern student managed all computer glitches, problems and presentation hurdles. A very sincere thankyou to Evelyn Firstenberg who generously and professionally edited all the conference papers and most importantly, a very special thankyou to Seraphina Nicholls who has tirelessly and superbly designed and managed the collation and publication of this special issue. These people and others, the LSB committee and particularly Deakin University who gave generously for the LSB Education Program, enabled the 'Creating Utopia' conference to make a significant contribution to issues relating to climate change, environmental and global futures and the role of the arts and sustainable planning.

### Lindy Joubert

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# A BeeC's: changing our thinking to changing the world

Jane & Peter Dyer  
Melbourne Beekeepers

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## ABSTRACT

The arts, architecture and an understanding of the natural world play an integral role in raising and maintaining public awareness to the role bees play in the environment. Our paper introduces issues such as how a sustainable future requires pollinators and why Insect pollination is integral to food security. Honey bees enable the production of at least ninety commercially grown crops and globally, eighty-seven of the leading one hundred and fifteen food crops evaluated are dependent on animal pollinators, contributing to thirty five percent of the global food production.

Most importantly, bees play a major role in one of the most fundamental ecological processes—the pollination of plants. We present the critical importance of how future art, architecture, landscape and building designs need to support and promote apiary awareness and our mission is to stimulate public interest and provide object-based learning opportunities. Above all, our paper hopes to increase the public acceptance of bees as part of a sustainable utopian environment.

*“The future of our food supply may be shaped by cultural and social innovation and cooperation as much as, if not more than, by a series of discrete scientific discoveries”*

John T Lang, 2016

Jane and Peter are urban beekeepers based in middle-ring suburban Melbourne. Their apiary, Backyard Honey Pty Ltd, was seeded a decade ago with the idea of creating a micro-business that would work towards shifting negative perceptions about bees and help shape a sustainable future.

Backyard Honey was established with the purpose of modeling the positive possibilities of urban beekeeping within the immediate community. Jane and Peter work towards actively increasing healthy populations of urban bees, and harvesting pure raw unheated honeys from the 150 honey beehives they have seamlessly embedded in Melbourne's leafy gardens and under utilized backyards. As a result of their advocacy, swarm removal and apiary management services, the Backyard Honey beekeepers are able to harvest and supply low carbon-mile pure raw unadulterated, unheated whole honey for Melbourne's dining tables and lunch boxes. Last season the apiary harvested over 2,000 kg of pure raw unheated honey, including honey from hives they steward at Melbourne University.<sup>1</sup>

The Creating Utopia Conference 2018 provided Jane and Peter with an advocacy opportunity to actively explore the intersection of bees with art, architecture and landscape in a sustainable future, with visionaries and influencers, artists, landscapers, architects and academics. Their presentation, A BeeC's – changing our thinking to changing the world, was developed to highlight the following aspects:

1. Why do we need bees?
2. What do healthy bees need?
3. Provide an overview of built environments that actively promote bees through art, landscape and architecture.<sup>2</sup>

Following a similar format to the original Creating Utopia Conference presentation, it is important to start this essay by highlighting the important and integral role bees play in our lives and in one of our most fundamental ecological processes—the pollination of plants. Indeed, a sustainable future requires pollinators because bees are responsible for pollinating more than a third of our edible crops, including coffee trees and almond plantations. Bees pollinate plants needed by life forms right through the animal kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Australia is currently the only country in the world with no Varroa mite, the deadly parasite decimating bee populations across the world. Last year, April 2016 – April 2017, America lost 40% of their honey-bees.<sup>4</sup> With the global increase in monoculture farming and weed-free urban landscapes, and the associated use of chemicals and diminished flora variety, healthy local and international bee habitats are increasingly threatened and diminished. Melbourne suburban gardens, backyards and parklands, with a temperate four season climate, are well placed to make a significant contribution to bee health and bee security at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup>

The Backyard Honey beekeepers' bees, beekeeping and food security advocacy is presented formally via booked Prep – 12 educational incursions opportunities, structured community presentations, and student mentoring at Deakin and Melbourne Universities.

Conferences and professional presentations, attracting a think tank of academic, business and public influencers provide a wonderful opportunity to advocate for the creation of more landscapes and built environments to bring people closer to bees.

Informal apiary advocacy is primarily achieved by integrating healthy managed beehives into urban environments, modeling positive bee-keeping and landscape design, and actively promoting the health and medicinal value of locally harvested multi-floral and varietal honeys. Backyard Honey's Melbourne multi-floral honey 2017-18 harvest scored a TOTAL ACTIVITY (TA), antimicrobial rating average of 25+<sup>6</sup>. The anti-bacterial activity of honey is derived via natural enzymes and chemicals in the honey. Honey with a TA of greater than 10+ may have beneficial antimicrobial properties. Antimicrobial properties are more effective as the TA level increases.<sup>7</sup>

A bee colony needs to eat at least 2 kilogram a month in Melbourne to survive. It takes a bee 5 million flowers visits to make 1 kg of honey.<sup>8</sup>

## **How can we ensure there are sufficient flowers for bees to feed from?**

It's easy: embrace weeds and wild lawns; let herbs go to seed; plant lavender and tea-tree hedges rather than box hedges; select daisies over succulents; substitute a sterile specimen tree with a fruit tree, large flowering gum, callistemon or grevillea tree; visit your local nursery and specifically ask for pollinator friendly plants; select flowering plants with perfume and pollens to attract and feed bees. Bees are particularly attracted to white, blue and purple flowers, like rosemary and westringia, with stamens and pollens that are easy for them to access. Plant a vertical lavender garden on your wall; fill your balcony with pots of rosemary; look after a lemon or cumquat tree; talk to a bee-keeper. It is also important to note, that bees need permanent access to water and require a perch to sit on while they drink. On a hot summer day this can be very tricky, particularly when we realise the evaporative cooling required to cool the hive is achieved by a combination of beating bee wings and water.<sup>9</sup> We can all give the bees a hand by mindfully adapting and installing water features in landscapes and built environments with perches, pebbles and wood rafts, for bees to drink from.

## **The role of art, landscape and architecture in promoting bee pollination**

Through the ages and across civilizations, bees and beehive motifs have been used to shift perceptions and convey meaning. Art, architecture and built environments create powerful positive emotional responses, and work towards dispelling fear about bees. Bees and beehives have played a powerful role over time and concepts in a many ways. From the tombs of ancient Egypt, incorporated into religious imagery of all denominations, literary metaphor and as icons of colonisation across the centuries. Egypt, the bee was seen as a symbol of royalty and power<sup>10</sup>. The 16th century Elizabethan sea captain and explorer, Sir Francis Drake, chose to feature bee designs in the plaster ceilings of his home, Buckland Abbey in Devon, England.<sup>11</sup>

In France, bees represent immortality and resurrection. They were considered the first emblem of the kings of France.<sup>12</sup> In Rome, from the Fontana delle Api, the Fountain of Bees, in Piazza Barberini to the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican, bees still feature as the chosen motif of the powerful 17th Century Barberini Dynasty<sup>13</sup>. The beehive first appeared on the American State of Utah's state flag and state emblem in 1848. Indeed, the bee has been used as the City of Manchester's emblem for over 150 years. Bees and flowers are intrinsic decorative features on the Nativity Doors at Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain. Gaudí saw the facade as a representation of nativity, a symbol of life and creation. These doors were included on the UNESCO Heritage List in 2005.<sup>14</sup>

The historical importance of bees is clearly correlated to, and recognized in, purpose-built apiaries around the world. The elaborate and decoratively painted bee-houses in Slovenia reflect the importance European communities place on looking after their bee coups. In this culture, bees are stewarded with the respect they deserve as an integral part of the community's agriculture, sustenance, medicine, and domestic life (in which they provide wax for candles and waterproofing homes and clothes). Closer to home, the substantial double storey octagonal apiary established in 1847 by Spanish Benedictine monks in the remote desert monastic community of New Norcia in Western Australia, is a testament to the critical ongoing role bees played in this community and the importance the monks placed on them.

Art, architecture and landscape create powerful positive emotional responses, and work towards dispelling fear about bees in many ways. Contemporary architects, artists and designers around the world continue to be inspired by bees and beehives to create innovative hive-shaped buildings, honeycomb structures and bee motifs. The greenery-filled Beehive Tower on Heron Quay in London is an example of a state of the art vertical farm inspired by the hexagonal forms of the honeycomb. Inspired by the scientific research of Dr Martin Bencsik into the health of honeybees, artist Wolfgang Buttress created and placed an immense immersive sight and sound experience, *The Hive*, amongst a wildflower meadow in Kew Gardens<sup>15</sup>. *The Hive* powerfully highlights the pollinators' critical role in feeding the planet and the challenges facing bees today. *The Hive* was named as one of CNN's most visually inspiring moments in 2016. A creative music-art-science work on a different scale is the arresting work of Rae Howell. Showcasing an innovative combination of disciplines, Rae's work effectively raises public awareness about the broad contribution bees make to our lives. Another creative experimental screen-based commission, *The beehive* by Australian artist and activist Zany Begg, integrates the recurring motif of bees and their communal ways of living and working to subtly raise public awareness.

In Australia, *The Bee's Reverie* created by Richard Stringer and installed by Nonda Katsalidis in 2007, is a gigantic sculpture featuring bees on the base of Melbourne's iconic 21st century residential Eureka Tower<sup>16</sup>. Across the Pacific, Manhattan sculptor Christopher Russell was commissioned to enhance New York subway stations.<sup>17</sup>

Developed as an analogy of pedestrian movement around the subway being like bee traffic around a beehive, Christopher was inspired to design eye-catching bronze gates, 7 feet high and 6 feet wide, crawling with bees on hives and flowers.

A giant bee sculpture features prominently in the Eden Project, a dramatic global garden housed in tropical biomes nestled in a disused china clay pit crater the size of 30 football pitches in Cornwall. With a world-wide reputation, the Eden Project has been recognised by the British Travel Awards as the Best UK Leisure Attraction five years running 2011-2015<sup>18</sup>.

Another giant bee sculpture that catches the public eye and helps shift negative perceptions about bees is *The bee of life*. This wood-carving was commissioned to launch the 2015 Chesterfield Pollination Conference and support the 'Pollinating the Peak' campaign.

Smaller scale public art like *Small Utopias* created by Melbourne-based artist and academic, Elisabeth Presa<sup>19</sup>, and Aganetha Dyck, a sculptor who innovatively collaborates with bees to create delightful sculptures wrapped in honeycomb, wake the senses and remind public audiences across the world about the beauty of nature and the mystical designs of bees.

The glowing painted wall murals of London street artist Louis Masai Michel, are eye-catching conversation starters and an effective way of raising bee health issues, particularly awareness of Colony Collapse Disorder. His The Art of Beeing Project is calling for individuals to unite, much like bees, to put nature first. Mural artist Matthew Willey is painting 50,000 honeybees in murals around the world in the hope that his bees continue to invoke thought and engagement around the world<sup>20</sup>.

Indeed, each of the above examples illustrates the many ways art, landscape and architecture have, and do, shift public perception by embedding positive community awareness about the critical role bees play in our natural and built environments. The Creating Utopia Conference 2018 and the ensuing invitation to Backyard Honey to present an essay for the UNESCO Observatory Refereed Journal are further examples of the different ways artists, landscapers, architects, academics and public advocates inspire creative advocacy and healthy bees. Inspired by the communal industry and harmony of bees, together we can achieve great things.



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