

## Creative Social Stewardship, Artistic Engagement, and the Environment

**Cara Hagan**, Appalachian State University, [hangelbercm@appstate.edu](mailto:hangelbercm@appstate.edu)

**Theresa Redmond**, Appalachian State University, [redmondta@appstate.edu](mailto:redmondta@appstate.edu)

**Abstract:** This article describes an innovative, grant-funded symposium for creative social stewardship that sought to blend the triad of art, education, and the natural environment through a focus on socio-cultural sustainability and community engagement. The purpose of this article is to share foundational information related to the origins of the symposium, describe the tenants of community arts initiatives, feature a session snapshot, and discuss the value of creative social stewardship as a part of daily practice. We conclude by making recommendations for future endeavors in cultivating creative social stewardship conferences or initiatives, ultimately promoting the idea that collaborative, community-based and arts-focused events might inspire reflection on connection, nature, and creativity in ways that nurture sustainability.

**Keywords:** art-making; socio-cultural sustainability; ecojustice education; creative social stewardship; media; communication

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*Cara Hagan is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice is informed by movement, words, digital space, contemplative practice, and community. Ms. Hagan serves on the dance studies faculty at Appalachian State University, as well as serving as director and curator for ADF's Movies By Movers, an annual, international dance film festival under the auspices of the American Dance Festival. Cara's scholarly and creative work can be found in various publications, including the Snapdragon Journal of Art and Healing, Collective terrain, Quill and Parchment, Headwaters Journal of Expressive Arts, the International Journal of Screendance, and in the book, Dance's Duet with the Camera: Motion Pictures, edited by Telory D. Arendell and Ruth Barnes. Currently Cara is under contract to complete her first solo authored book through McFarland Publishing.*

*Theresa Redmond is an Associate Professor at Appalachian State University where she teaches in Media Studies and Teacher Education. She studies how media and communication technologies impact literacy, fluency, learning, community, and expression. Currently, Theresa is exploring measures to evaluate media literacy, ecomedia literacy, and nonlinear pedagogies for media literacy education.*

## **Introduction**

Art making and artistic thinking play an important role in cultivating socio-cultural sustainability, shifting public perspectives and perceptions from a mechanistic, siloed culture to one where people seek to cross traditional barriers – such as discipline, place, and physical space – to engage in creative social stewardship. To isolate one system from another, which is the definition of siloed, is to engage in framing the world through an industrial paradigm. This framing positions human beings outside of physical and ecological systems, while also suggesting a world of infinite plenty (Lakoff, 2010). Environmental activist and educator Chet Bowers (2002) writes of “the illusions of global plentitude” (p.21), calling for ecojustice education. This article suggests that ecojustice education can be achieved through the triad of art, education, and the natural environment, and describes an innovative, grant-funded symposium for creative social stewardship that embodies effective pedagogies and practice in socio-cultural sustainability. The purpose of this piece is to share how collaborative, community-based and arts-focused events might inspire connection with nature and creativity as interconnected aspects of socio-cultural sustainability, and offer suggestions for continuing this work.

With opportunities that enable artistic thinking, we may invite the public to consider how the worlds we inhabit, both our natural and our digital landscapes, do not exist mechanistically. Instead, they are ecological and all parts impact, shape, and affect all other parts. A paradigm of dependency and interconnection requires a *reframing* of cultural understandings and ideologies (Bowers, 2002; Lakoff, 2010; López, 2014). By cultivating artistic and ecological thinking, educators across disciplines can grow opportunities for stewardship and encourage social engagement and active cognitive *reassociation* with our environments.

### **The Symposium for Creative Social Stewardship**

*“Artists are stewards for the soul of the individual and the spirit of our communities.”*  
-Hagan, 2016

## **Origins**

As a mover, I consider the human body to be an integral part of the natural world – an existence as part of our ecosystem that includes our physical presence on the earth and our cognitive presence, an attribute unique to human beings, which has led us to invent and engage with our environment in ways other sentient beings cannot. While the conversation around the human body and sustainability most often includes health and environmental awareness – the food we eat, the way we move our bodies to keep us mobile throughout our lives, or how we use our bodies in ways that may be harmful or helpful to the earth – I am most interested in socio-cultural sustainability. As human beings, emotional and social sustainability is an important piece in considering a holistic philosophy and practice of sustainability that can be achieved through creative means, and by creative, I mean the arts. I coined the term, *creative social stewardship (CSS)* as my way of expressing the capacity for the arts to play a role in preserving emotional and social equilibrium in our communities and further, its capacity to inspire growth. My personal definition of creative social stewardship is as follows:

*Creative Social Stewardship is a method of community engagement, which invites citizens to tap into their whimsical, radical, colorful, innovative selves to foster and preserve inclusive, emotionally sustainable community environments that combat social stigma and discrimination through outward creative expression (Hagan, 2016).*

I have spent the last dozen years, both in the academy as a dance professor and in the community as a professional, interdisciplinary artist, working toward realizing this definition of sustainable engagement and a vision of a peaceful, productive society through curriculum development, teaching, and creating collaboratively with others. Further, I have worked to create a concise philosophy of engagement that speaks to a wide range of projects and initiatives, both large and small that can be carried out by anyone with an interest in socio-cultural sustainability and a desire to be creative, in any modality.

## **Tenets**

As a community artist and educator, there are six tenets by which I initiate and consider the effectiveness of community-based projects. These guidelines speak to my desire to recognize the arts as a site for progressive metamorphosis, breaking down barriers between people and creating spaces for all forms of creative expression to be voiced and validated. In my view, community arts initiatives should embody the following six tenants:

1. Change the rhetoric with which we describe our communities and the people in them.
2. Inspire transformative dialogue.
3. Create positive relationships to learning.
4. Provide creative, therapeutic assistance or intervention.
5. Improve the condition of our environments, both natural and urban.
6. Build bridges – metaphorical and physical – between people and communities.

While some of these tenets may seem to require skills outside of the arts -such as providing creative, therapeutic assistance or intervention – one of the most important aspects of this philosophy is that it encourages collaboration among disciplines, both artistic and skills-based. My definition of what can be art is quite broad; I consider the seventh-grade teacher to be as creative as the painter, the social worker to be as creative as the musician, and so on. For me, the collaborations fostered through this philosophy have informed my experiences and have helped my own understanding of how our communities are interconnected.

## **Purpose and Planning**

Since my arrival at my current institution in the fall of 2014, I have been looking for ways to share my experiences working with varied groups over the past ten years in my new context. My experiences include working those who have experiencing domestic violence, those requiring family services, people experiencing homelessness, people with mental health needs, disabilities, youth, and teaching young adults to work creatively in community. Our institution awards an annual Sustainability in the Arts Grant meant to connect creative works and creative minds to conversations around sustainability. I thought the grant would be a great opportunity to get the campus community talking about creative social stewardship, thus I proposed a Symposium for Creative Social Stewardship that would bring together professors, staff and students from as many different parts of the university community as possible, in addition to the public. My desire to plan and produce a full, interdisciplinary symposium came from my experience at my previous institution in planning and producing a small Dance in Community Symposium, which included presentations by fellow dance educators, dance therapists, and those working in community in innovative ways through movement.

In planning for the symposium, I circulated a call to faculty and staff that encouraged them to consider my definition of creative social stewardship and further define creative social stewardship in their own unique ways based on their experiences in their respective fields. I contacted William Cleveland, the Director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community on Bainbridge Island, WA to act as the keynote speaker and special guest presenter. I first learned of Mr. Cleveland's vast and constantly evolving work around creative social stewardship, social justice, and community arts while in graduate school. William Cleveland is a philosopher, connector, and a doer. His publications span concepts in crisis management through the arts, to innovative ways to address issues unique to communities from within their own community organizations. I felt that having Mr. Cleveland open the Symposium with an address and a workshop would set a context and precedent for the rest of the weekend's activities.

Cleveland's keynote, "*Between Grace and Fear: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change*," explored the history and ecology of community arts and the wide range of collaborative applications for creativity in community. In essence, the address served to raise awareness and call to action the symposium participants. Mr. Cleveland explained:

*Challenging and confusing times are upon us. It is a time for creative communicators, mediators, translators, and healers. The building of capable and caring communities must be undertaken by citizens and institutions with enormous energy and imagination. Many cultural workers are helping to address these challenges by responding to the issues and stories emanating from the broader community. The result has been the creation of cultural partnerships between artists and cultural institutions and schools, factories, jails, universities, neighborhood associations, senior centers, unemployment offices, and every other place imaginable. (Hagan, 2016)*

His talk stressed the importance of listening and moving forward with creative community endeavors with the needs expressed by specific communities at the forefront of the planning and implementation process. Using his own community arts experiences in prisons and other public institutions, and through the projects by other artist/organizers highlighted in his talk, Mr. Cleveland emphasized that the arts are capable of much more than making beauty. He elaborated that many of us already involved in this work believe that the arts can save the world, or at least preserve what is most precious about it, both environmentally and socially. The audience seemed eager to know more, as they responded with many questions.

## **CSS in Action**

The main conference commenced on Saturday morning with Mr. Cleveland's workshop "*Making Exact Change: How Arts-Based Programs Have Made Significant and Sustained Impact on their Communities*." The session further explored some of the concepts presented in his talk the evening before, extending opportunities to engage with new questions, including:

- *What promotes and nurtures our individual and collective creativity?*
- *What skills do partners need to enter into successful collaborations?*
- *Are there different aspects of the creative called up by different circumstances?*
- *How do arts and non-arts partners find common ground and mutual self-interest?*
- *What are the ethical and moral implications of arts-based community development?*

Sitting in a circle, we pondered these questions and engaged in story sharing and brainstorming (see Figure 1). By the end of the session, we had come up with a new list of questions, inspired

by our individual and collective experiences, and shared ideas across the circle of how to move forward. Some of our questions included the following:

*“The Pygmies have lived in the forest for centuries, now development threatens their livelihood. How can they be helped in the most effective ways?”* (Peter, Student/Staff).

*“How do we use creative projects to increase intergenerational exchange, especially in small, rural communities?”* (Tom, Faculty”).

*“Women and Immigration – How do we document the creation of a new life through the arts?”* (Heather, Staff).



Figure 1: Generating questions during William Cleveland’s workshop, *“Making Exact Change: How Arts-Based Programs Have Made Significant and Sustained Impact on their Communities.”* Photo credit: Rob Gelber

These questions and others prompted deep conversations regarding the similarities and differences in our backgrounds, experiences, and particular communities of origin and engagement. Through this process, we created a supportive, sustainable community of our own, held together by our circle and our agreement that anything spoken in the circle would be safe with the group. With many more questions and new inspiration, the group dispersed to both present and participate in the sessions scheduled for the rest of the day. The full symposium program is included in the appendix to this article.

In all, the Symposium for Creative Social Stewardship boasted ten separate sessions, largely in participatory workshop format. Workshops featured titles like: “*Cultivating Social Consciousness Through Expressive Arts*” (see Figure 2) and “*Somatic Practice and Sustainability*.” The workshops invited participants to work with clay, two-dimensional media, the body, the voice, and more. Many featured collaborations between several entities on campus, such as the workshop entitled, “*Theatre and Therapy: Creating Community and Communication for Adults with Disabilities*,” which included faculty from Theatre and Speech Language Pathology, and Staff from the Office of Faculty and Academic Development. These presentations and the projects they represented were emblematic of the six tenets I outlined above. While individual definitions of creative social stewardship varied widely across the symposium, the focus of our work was on engaging in conversation with each other, in the same space, and striving to identify how our philosophies overlapped and how to address potential blind spots in our work.



Figure 2: Connecting over clay in workshop, “*Cultivating Social Consciousness through Expressive Arts*.” Photo credit: Cara Hagan

Later in the afternoon, I had the pleasure of sitting in on the session entitled, “*Cultivating Creativity, Community and Presence in the Age of Distraction*.” The workshop was an exercise in collaborative modes of communication, both analogue and digital. As for my own experience in the workshop, I was delighted to partner with an eleven-year-old girl, with whom I worked through a verbal puzzle using cell phone texts in emoji’s only and another through hand gestures. The experience made me realize how the acts of listening and understanding are multidimensional and how our steady distractions from the constant flow of media in our lives and changing attitudes about person to person communication is altering our ability to listen and receive in-

formation. It also highlighted some of the complexities of communicating across generations who have come of age with varied technologies. As a woman in her early 30's, I am technically a millennial. However, my relationship to technology is very different than that of a person born in the early 2000's. I found this engaging, and as I looked around the room at other sets of partners working through their puzzles. For me, the workshop highlighted how important issues of translation and modes of communication are in doing the work of inclusivity in sustainability education. Referring to the tenets, this workshop seemed to align most with tenet number 6, which is about bridge building. Too, I wondered how this team of presenters devised the workshop and how *they* considered its relationship to creative social stewardship. Theresa Redmond explains further how the workshop came to be, and how the activities therein align with the philosophy and practice of CSS.

### **Session Snapshot: Cultivating Creative Social Stewardship through Collaborative Media Making**

#### **Purpose and Planning**

I was inspired by the sense of creativity, connection, and social action suggested by the idea of CSS. In the call for papers, the symposium's creator and director defined creative social stewardship as "*a method of community engagement, which invites citizens to tap into their whimsical, radical, colorful, innovative selves to foster and preserve inclusive, emotionally sustainable community environments that combat social stigma and discrimination through outward creative expression*" (Hagan, 2016). My experience of academic life up to this point had been one of relative isolation that lacked creative, community partnership. The call for papers was a refreshing, nourishing invitation to reengage my past arts background within my current university role. I approached two of my colleagues about participating by creating a workshop together. While we all teach courses as part of a campus-wide, undergraduate Media Studies minor, opportunities to actually teach together in physical space and synchronous time are infrequent. In fact, although I identify as a media studies and digital arts scholar, I often question the role of digital tools in regards to how they impact our communication and connections in the natural environment and with each other.

For instance, Facebook users are uploading 350 million new photos to the popular social network each day (Smith, 2013), while Instagram boasts 40 million images shared per day (Bunton, 2013), and over one hundred hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube Statistics, n.d.). Collectively, we create, consume, and communicate through media. But do we actually *connect*? What defines authentic and meaningful connection and engagement with our world and each other? What are the benefits and drawbacks of all this media for how we participate in our local and global communities? How can digital art-making foster empathy and connections to the world, rather than widening the gaps between people and their natural environments? These questions shape not only my own explorations in media, but also how I approach teaching. Further, they connect in vibrant ways to the six tenets of CSS developed and described by Cara Hagan. In discussing and planning our proposed workshop, my colleagues and I sought to examine how creating and sharing media may build bridges for our students to relate to each other in the physical world. We wanted to share inventive art-making processes and projects that we do with our media studies students with the symposium participants in the hopes that these experiences would nurture empathetic and engaged thinking.

We called our workshop “*Cultivating Creativity, Community, and Presence in an Age of Distraction*.” We sought to encourage participants, through multimodal communication and media making, to more fully expand their senses and cultivate attention to their environment and to each other. Yet, we also sought an experience as colleagues working together in the common endeavor of fostering creative experiences and critical thinking.

### **CSS in Action**

Our workshop included two parts and our session participants comprised college-aged students, faculty and staff ranging from 30 to 50, and a family including a Mother and her teen-aged and tween-aged daughters. What emerged from this representative group and our two activities was a rich dialogue and dance of cognitive reassociation with each other and the world as participants brought awareness to how we use media, and how media uses us.

In the first part, *Communication and Connection*, we developed an experience whereby participants paired up and each person was given an aphorism (e.g., “A rising tide lifts all boats” or “In like a lion, out like a lamb”) that they would share with their partner, but with a twist. The twist was that participants needed to get their partner to guess the aphorism *without* using words directly related to the phrase, and through different modes of communication. Along with the aphorisms, partner groups were assigned four modes of communication: including texting, body language, visuals, and talking on the phone. The goal of our activity was to cultivate opportunities for participants to explore how different modes of communication might impact how we build relationships and connect with other people. We get habituated to using media tools in certain ways and interacting with each other according to the rules of the tools. Part of media literacy education is building awareness of how technologies contain and convey biases that restrict our identities and ways of relating. While critically analyzing these biases is part of media literacy, “a further aspect [includes] audiencing [whereby] audiences develop meanings by producing their own materials” (Rose, 2016, p. 41). Engaging in creative communication as part of audiencing enabled participants to break out of these constraints while also actively feeling these constraints. Ultimately, creative production gave participants a chance to develop awareness of media tools and repurpose media for creative connection. This process relates to the first tenet of CSS, which focuses on changing the rhetoric with which we describe and engage in community.

In the second part, *Tools and the Beginner’s Mind*, we prepared a media making activity in which partners took an initial photo using an iPad. Then, partner groups switched iPads, offering their photograph to another group. The task then became to use the photograph as a prompt or inspiration to take a new, but related photograph. In this way, groups exchanged imagery in a repeated cycle, each time challenged to create or capture an image that would carry on some visual theme. Our goal in this activity was to foster *shoshin*, which is a concept in Zen Buddhism of “the beginner’s mind.” Suzuki (2010) explains, “The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities. It is the kind of mind which can see things as they are, which step by step and in a flash can realize the original nature of everything” (p.8). More so than ever before, media shapes our individual identities and our conceptions of reality, including what we think we know about people, societies, and cultures. (Rose, 2016) Some scholars have argued that we are becoming desensitized as a result of all this media exposure (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007), while others suggest that the

principles of democracy are made stronger as a result of our new, participatory culture (Shirky, 2010). In cultivating “the beginner’s mind” through photography, we hoped to enable participants to *resensitize* themselves to their natural environment by encouraging them to pay attention to the details of their world more fully.

Figures 3 and 4 are examples of our *shoshin* exercise, or linked photo cycles, that we shared with participants to introduce the activity. The two examples highlight how individual interpretations of the same image may differ, initiating a creative cycle of imagery that is distinct depending on the photographer.

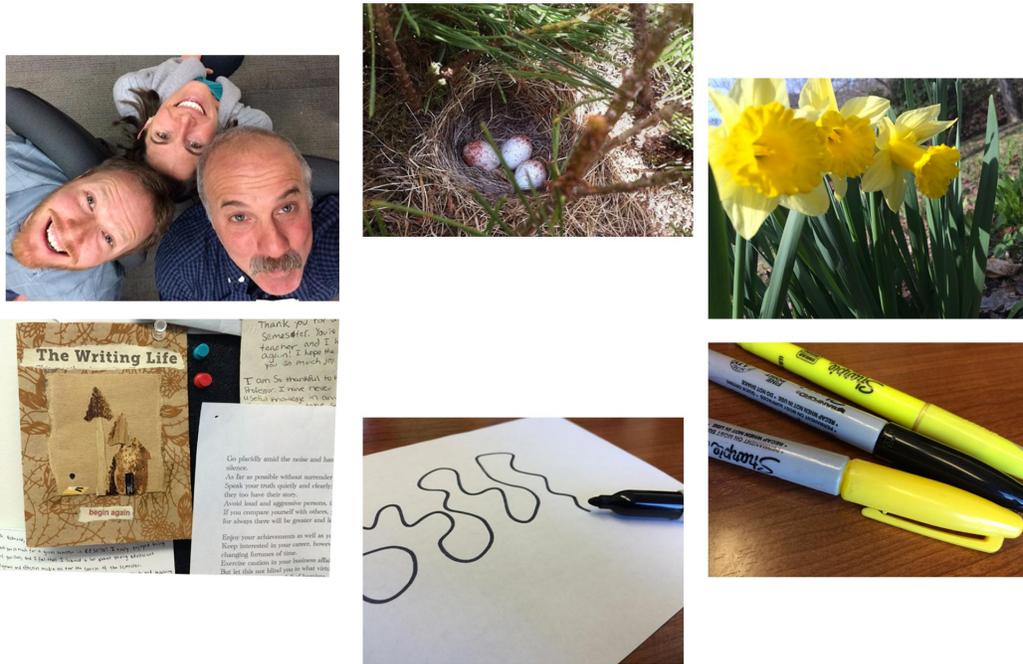


Figure 3: An example of a Linking Photography Cycle. *Photo credit: Theresa Redmond*

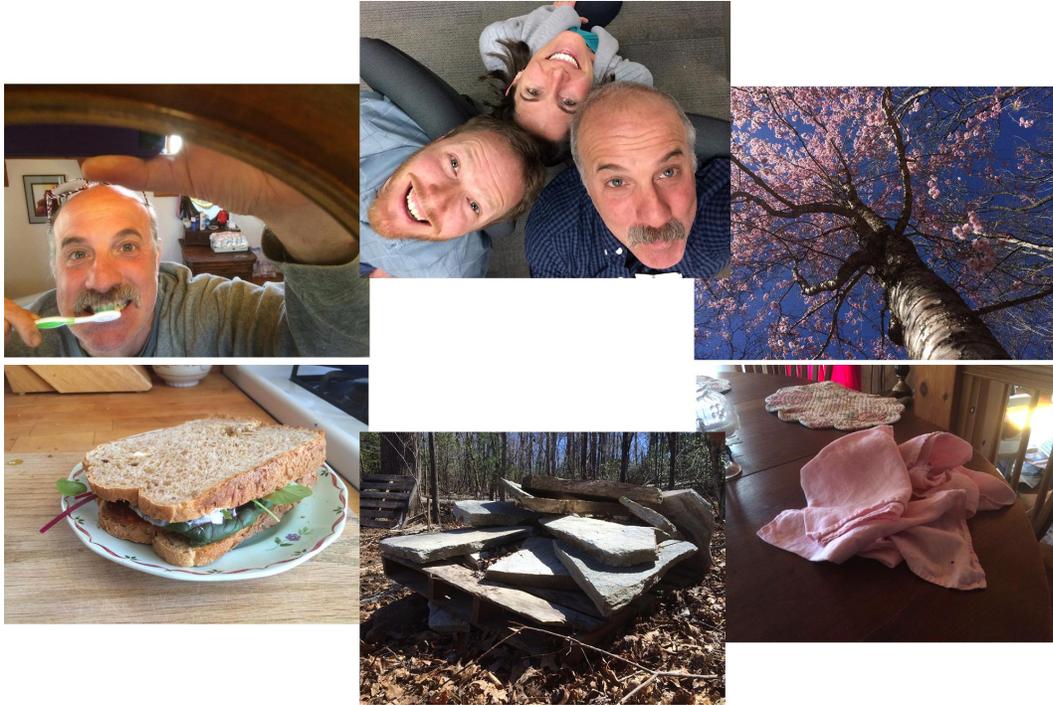


Figure 4: A second example of a Linking Photography Cycle. *Photo credit: Jeff Goodman*

The goal of our linked photo cycle activity was to encourage participants to use digital tools in new ways, while also seeing the world through new eyes. Further, we were working to cultivate connections between each other, connections within ourselves, and connections to the physical world. Following their creative photographic meanderings, we asked participants to discuss:

- How did this activity connect you with each other in meaningful, playful ways?
- How did this activity connect you with your creative spirit and heart?
- How did this activity connect you with your physical world and environment?

This process, as we learned, relates to CSS tenants 5 and 6, specifically as the experience invited participants to improve the conditions of our environment and to build both physical and metaphorical bridges between people and communities.

## **Outcomes**

In response to *Communication and Connection*, participants were immediately immersed in discussion of the four modes of communication, sharing successes and frustrations as they described which aphorisms they were assigned and how they communicated using various modes and media. Specifically, the conversation centered on the constraints or affordances of the different modes of communication, and the biases they brought to our communicative practice. For instance, communication through body language and visuals was the most effective and efficient, while texting seemed the least efficient and caused the most frustration. Yet participants – in particular our teen and tween representatives – explained that they used texting more frequently in their daily communication because it was seemingly more efficient. After some discussion, it was also revealed that texting was less intrusive in that it did not require the communicators to engage in conversation that might veer from the message purpose. In connecting our activity

back to the idea of creative social stewardship as a practice for socio-cultural sustainability, this realization gives one pause to consider how texting might limit authentic or deep communication and, potentially, thwart meaningful connections. Figure 5 reveals the physical isolation of texting, while Figure 6 illuminates the cohesive and connective power of clay as a medium for expression.



Figure 5: Participant working to communicate the aphorism “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” by texting. Although working in a common space, the modality of text messaging isolates the individual from physical and natural elements. *Photo credit: Rob Gelber*



Figure 6: Participant working to communicate the aphorism “a rising tide lifts all boats” by using physical materials, including her body and clay. Through the use of her body with clay, which may be symbolic of the earth and natural world, the participant is metaphorically grounded, in addition to being physically connected to the modality by shaping it. *Photo credit: Theresa Redmond*

Our second activity, *Tools and the Beginner’s Mind*, inspired playful and collaborative behavior, encouraging participants to interact and pay attention to their physical surroundings. Due to the restrictions of the session time, participants had to be resourceful and creative in connecting their imagery, using the immediate physical environment – including the session space, the building, and the out-of-doors – as resources. Following the exercise, each pair had the opportunity to share their linked photo cycle on the big screen in the session space. The collaborative and connective aspects of the exercise continued as we shouted out connections between the images; “*up, circle, light, line, shadow!*” Although it employed digital photography, which situates the creator behind a lens and separate from their physical environment, the experience proved to be tactile and physical as participants needed to think about the principles of design – pattern, repetition, emphasis, movement, rhythm, balance, unity – and engage with their world. The experience required that they embody the visuals and make real world connections.

In considering Hagan’s six tenets, I feel that our workshop was successful in creating positive relationships to learning and in building bridges – both metaphorical and physical – between people and their environment. We set out to create a playful opportunity for participants to more fully expand their senses to each other and to their physical surroundings. Likewise, as presenters, we sought to do this ourselves by engaging as conductors of creative experience. In

many ways, the aforementioned tenants inspire and cultivate socio-cultural awareness and habits, ultimately enabling people to improve the condition of our psychological, emotional, creative, and natural environments.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Symposium for Creative Social Stewardship successfully brought together diverse people, perspectives, and practices in alignment towards arts, sustainability, and social engagement, ultimately encompassing and connecting to the six tenants of community arts initiatives. The blend of participants, backgrounds, and experiences represented at the symposium – from faculty to students and staff on campus, to some members from our local mountain community – enabled broader engagement and perspectives throughout the event, helping to establish creative stewardship as a core value of our community.

Since this Symposium is the first of its kind held on our campus, there were aspects of it that may be reconsidered for future conferences or alternative ventures. For example, some of the sessions could have been longer, in order to give participants more time to fully realize the projects they started and to more fully dialogue about what had happened. It may have been beneficial to provide time for people to socialize before and after sessions, as these in-between times at conferences – lunches, coffee breaks, etc.– are incredibly useful not only for spurring conversations and networking, but also for fostering community beyond the conference event. An official closing session would also have been useful, comprising all of the presenters and participants, to sum up the full conference experience and to talk about how to establish the tenants of creative social stewardship as part of our daily practices. Finally, while well-attended by participants affiliated with the University, working toward garnering a broader audience more inclusive of our immediate mountain community and communities from neighboring counties may have been valuable in creating substantive dialogue. In reflecting on the experience of the Symposium for Creative Social Stewardship, it is clear to us that our societies, both local and global, can and are benefitting from the work of artful, sustainable social engagement. In the future, we hope to continue finding creative ways to have conversations around socio-cultural sustainability, through subsequent symposia and through the creativity of our colleagues in the classroom and in other public events that may come out of this endeavor.

Daily practice of CSS is possible not only in our own lives, but also in our communities. In thinking of how to support our readers in considering how they may cultivate a practice for themselves and in their own communities, we have generated a list of questions that may help to inspire conversation and reflection in planning, design, and enactment:

1. How do you define creative social stewardship in the context of your community and personal experience?
2. How do you consider creative social stewardship to be a part of a holistic practice of sustainability?
3. What opportunities and challenges exist in your community for doing this work?
4. In what ways can you practice creative social stewardship every day, building bridges throughout your community, in your life's work, and within yourself?

As Bickel (2015) writes of socially engaged art, “These practices reflect a move to return art to daily life, with an awareness of the human interconnectedness with the world and the more

than human world through art” (p. 80). Through creative social stewardship, we can reintegrate people with each other, people with their natural world, and people across disciplines to cultivate connected, ecological thinking that nurtures socio-cultural sustainability practices.

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## Appendix

### Friday, April 1st 2016

#### **7pm, Blue Ridge Ballroom (201)**

#### **Keynote Address with Bill Cleveland**

#### **Between Grace and Fear: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change**

*Challenging and confusing times are upon us. It is a time for creative communicators, mediators, translators, and healers. The building of capable and caring communities must be undertaken by citizens and institutions with enormous energy and imagination. Many cultural workers are helping to address these challenges by responding to the issues and stories emanating from the broader community. The result has been the creation of cultural partnerships between artists and cultural institutions and schools, factories, jails, universities, neighborhood associations, senior centers, unemployment offices, and every other place imaginable.*

*As investment in this work has increased, so have the stakes for the communities and individuals involved. Artists and their community collaborators are tackling daunting issues like community safety, education, and economic development. This talk will describe the history and ecology of artists, arts organizations and community partners involved in this work. It will also address the opportunities and challenges encountered when artists, arts organizations and, non-arts community organizations, join in partnership. Finally, it will share some of the innovative strategies that have emerged in the field in response to increasing demands of the work.*

### Saturday, April 2nd

#### **10am-11:30am, Price Lake Room (201-A)**

#### **Making Exact Change: How Arts-Based Programs Have Made Significant and Sustained Impact on their Communities**

#### **Presenter: Bill Cleveland**

*This workshop is based on a recent CSA&C study undertaken to help the growing, but largely disconnected, community arts field in the US learn from its most venerable and successful colleagues. Its focus is exemplary arts-based programs that have had a significant and sustained positive impact on their communities. This interactive workshop will provide practical program design and implementation strategies for artists and arts organizations interested in working with community, social and educational institutions. Participants learn effective artistic, funding and political strategies used by model programs. Topics include:*

- *What promotes and nurtures our individual and collective creativity.*
- *What skills do partners need to enter into successful collaborations?*
- *Are there different aspects of the creative called up by different circumstances?*
- *How do arts and non-arts partners find common ground and mutual self-interest?*

- *What are the ethical and moral implication of arts-based community development?*

*\*This workshop will be the only workshop in this slot. The Rest of the day will take place in two rooms with panels and workshops happening simultaneously.*

**Saturday, April 2nd In the Price Lake Ballroom (201-A):**

**11:45am-12:45pm**

**Cultivating Social Consciousness Through Expressive Arts**

*Using clay as a medium of communication we will embark on an interactive collaborative process inviting non-verbal exchanges in small and large groups, as well as opportunities to harvest words, actions and feelings. Holding a piece of earth in our hands, we begin to explore what it means to be an integral part of the whole while bringing our own unique gifts to the table.*

Presenters: Susan Musilli & Katrina Plato  
Appalachian State University

**1pm-2pm**

**The Precious Sounds of Silence**

*This session will be a presentation of conversations both verbal and non-verbal (silence) that have contributed greatly to the development of relationships formed beyond the realm of friendship. The power of silence and the art of communication on varying levels become channels where positive energy ignites and sustainable stewardship emerges. Becoming present with one another, being vulnerable with one another, being silent with one another in a world where noise seems to be an imperative, can provoke heightened awareness and understanding that can be used in community building. We no longer need to be 'alone' together, but invite silence to bear witness to the power of unity and understanding.*

Presenters: Peter Thompson and Susan Musilli  
Appalachian State University

**2:15pm-3:15pm**

**Cultivating Creativity, Community, and Presence in an Age of Distraction**

*Meet the world and each other through new eyes in our creative workshop! Consider issues of distraction and engagement in the digital age by discussing how digital tools are changing our relationships, communities, and experiences in our physical world. We will share innovative teaching and learning activities and engage in a photographic mindfulness exercise as an example of community stewardship.*

Presenters: Theresa Redmond, Jeff Goodman, and John Henson  
Appalachian State University

**3:30pm-4:30pm**

**Somatic Practice and Sustainability**

*This experiential session will focus on somatic practice as a means to sustain the spirit. The presenter will share excerpts from an autoethnographic inquiry based on variety of body approaches and somatic writing. Participants will be gently guided to explore the concept of spaciousness before dropping into their own individualized somatic practice. The workshop will culminate by examining intersections between sustainability, spirit, somatic practices and social stewardship.*

Presenter: Marianne Adams  
Appalachian State University

**Saturday, April 2nd in the Rock Room (201-B):**

**11:45am-12:45pm**

**Creative Writer's Reading**

*Two creative nonfiction writers will read from their works and reflect upon what guides their writing practices in the context of current planetary crises. These authors suggest that creative writing is a way of engaging community that helps to build a desire for social stewardship—of the land and its human and nonhuman inhabitants—and that offers one way to creatively and artfully guide us as we navigate the challenges of the Anthropocene.*

Presenters: Zackery Vernon, and Jennifer Westerman  
Appalachian State University

**1pm-1:45pm**

**The Long Hope: Using the Arts to Connect State Parks to Local Culture**

*Over the past decade, students and faculty from the Center for Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University have partnered with community members to create and implement a community art plan that will support sustainable community development in the communities surrounding the Elk Knob State Park. The presentation will focus on the elements of this long term project, including oral histories, murals, sculpture and a crowd-sourced project that places art in the trails of this 3,600 acre state park in Ashe and Watauga Counties of North Carolina.*

Presenters: Tom Hansell, Kai Des Etages, Cody Miller, Brandy Bellville,  
Appalachian State University

**1:55pm-2:35pm**

**Theatre and Therapy: Creating Community and Communication for Adults with Disabilities**

*This panel presentation will provide an overview of innovative interdisciplinary project that incorporates creative expression and theater as a vehicle for therapy goals designed to improve communication in adults who have moderate to severe communication impairments. We anticipate that this model of intervention could easily be replicated and used by speech-language pathologists, theater and dance education teachers, and families.*

Presenters: Angela Losardo, Derek Davidson, Kathleen Brinko, Kim McCullough, Louise Keegan, and Emily Lakey, Appalachian State University

**2:45pm-3:45pm**

**Visual Legacies: the Power of the Personal Narrative**

*A presentation on the power of personal narratives videos as legacy films for terminally ill patients and their family members. The presentation will end with a workshop where participants will take part in "Story Corps" inspired interviews with a partner using their phones/available technology. \*Please bring phones to record interviews during the workshop activity.*

Presenter: Anne Slatton  
UNC Asheville

**4pm-5pm**

**Breaking the Silence - Arts-Based Research on the Intersection of Creative Arts and Women's Issues**

*This presentation will feature findings from a research study that explored the use of creative arts and Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) in a women's support group. The stories of the individual women, as well as the group process, will be experienced through images, artwork, and words. Additionally, the presenter will discuss the role of arts-based research in this study, focusing on the ability to communicate the lived experience of the women in a way that words alone cannot.*

Presenter: Cynthia Tate  
Appalachian State University

Cara Hagan



Theresa Redmond

