

RAFTS

by Alistair Debling

Friday 20th March - Monday 25th May

RAFTS by Alistair Debling is an exhibition commissioned by 'a space' arts for God's House Tower. The exhibition draws together data-driven climate research from Dr. Gordon Inglis at the University of Southampton and people-driven research from creative workshops with local charity, Rose Road to ask: what if climate change were reframed as an access and care issue? The resulting multimedia installation meditates on what it means to stay afloat in the face of disaster.

RAFTS imagines a climate future in which the main gallery space has been flooded with water and fragments of Gordon's lab have washed into the building, where they continue to be used as improvised floatation devices and workstations. At the far end of the gallery, a steep blue wave rises to the ceiling in a sudden "hockey stick" curve that mirrors a number of key climate data sets, including the merged ice core record, fossil fuel geochemical fingerprint data and the Mauna Loa Observatory records, each of which indicates the unprecedented rate at which humans are impacting the earth's climate.

Fragmentary videos inhabit each raft, revealing insights from conversations between artist and scientist. From a starting point of considering how the public might access (and why they should care about) Gordon's research, the moving image works open up a broader conversation around personal experiences with access

and care: for Gordon, living with a hidden disability and, for Alistair, caring for and losing a parent with complex access needs.

These conversations have been enriched by a number of creative workshops and interviews led by Alistair with service users and support workers at the Rose Road Association: a charity that provides direct care services for children and young adults with complex physical and learning disabilities across Southampton and the South. Through drawing, model-making, animation, writing, and talking, members of the Rose Road community were invited to reflect on how the climate crisis could impact them. Their responses invite us to consider what we might learn from thinking about the climate emergency through a lens of access and care.

More about Gordon's research

A palaeoclimatologist at the University of Southampton, Gordon and his lab team study geological samples dating back millions of years to better understand the deep time trajectory of the Earth's climate. By extracting molecular fossils from sedimentary rocks, his team evaluate the impact of higher carbon dioxide concentrations on temperature, rainfall patterns, and ecosystems over time. Palaeoclimatology demonstrates that, while the Earth has experienced dramatic shifts and higher temperatures in the past, there has unlikely been a period of such intense and rapid global heating as our current post-industrial period of anthropogenic climate change.

Project contributors

Dr. Gordon Inglis, McKenzie Bentley and Dr. Sargent Bray (School of Ocean and Earth Science, University of Southampton); Andy, Beth, Callum, Graham, Jack, Kieran, Laura, Megan and the Hut Support Work team (Rose Road Association); Viola Fey (composer); Kane Applegate (installation build)

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