

Cultures of Climate



Climate Ecologies: Responses to the Panicocene

School of Arts & Humanities
Group Show

**27 September
— 25 October**

23 October, 4-7pm (closing event)

Sovereign Design House
Queen St South Annexe, Huddersfield, HD1 3DR

Opening hours
Mon-Fri 10am- 2.30pm
Sat 27th September, 10am-2.30pm
Sat 25th October, 10am-2.30pm

Introduction

Climate Ecologies: Responses to the Panicocene is a partnership between the Cultures of Climate programme- the fourth edition of the Cultures Of_ festival of place-based development, hosted by the Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design, and Architecture at The University of Huddersfield- and Dr Elena Giacomelli (Marie Curie Fellow, University of Bologna; Visiting Scholar, Columbia Climate School and Durham University). Projects respond to the *Reimagining Climate (Im)mobilities in the Panicocene* conference, co-organised by Giacomelli and Professor Andrew Baldwin (School of Geography, Durham University), and developed with support from Cultures of Climate.

The exhibition brings together staff from the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield, who respond creatively to Giacomelli's concept of the Panicocene through the lenses of their disciplinary specialisms, including photography, architecture, videography, music, installation, and sculpture. It presents a constellation of visual works that interrogate the entangled crises of climate change and human mobility through the lenses of place, belonging, material culture, and activism. It responds to the critical questions raised by the concept of the Panicocene as an era where climate change and migration are framed in narratives of anxiety and emergency. In the Western dominant discourse, a politicized narrative of migration is often mixed with climate change and, as such, portrayed as a threat itself. In other words, when climate migration gains traction in media coverage, it is usually linked with security and risk issues rather than with efforts that reduce vulnerability to climate change effects. Mobilities under climate change may take many forms, which are contextually dependent and are shaped, at least in part, by existing relations of power and inequality. In dialogue with the conference's critical interrogation of visual aesthetics and narrative, the exhibition explores how we can re-frame narratives of climate-mobilities through grounded, place-based stories, foregrounding the textures of lived experience, rather than the dominant tropes of

threat and emergency.

As researchers based in the UK and EU, our mobility is rarely challenged as we benefit from access, opportunity, and privileged mobility within global systems. These advantages stand in sharp contrast to the challenges faced by many in the global majority, where climate impacts intersect with more limited access to resources and opportunities for movement. Our responses therefore reflect on how we can relate to the topic of climate mobilities from our own perspectives (both personal and disciplinary); or how we respond to provoking or inspiring contexts and stories.

Together, the works in *Climate Ecologies: Responses to the Panicocene* invite viewers to reconsider how climate change and mobility are represented and what stories they seek to tell. They ask us to look beyond the spectacle of crisis and toward the more intimate stories of place, connection, and the everyday; placing climate change and mobility as something in which we are all enmeshed. In doing so, the exhibition opens space for new climate imaginaries shaped not by fear, but by mutual interdependence, connection, and care.

Reclaimed Land Stewart Worthy

“The sea keeps us alive, but at the same time, it slowly eats us up. It eats our memories and our culture bit by bit. And that scares me. Migration is a good plan, but it is a contingency plan. We do not want to leave our country and go elsewhere. Our culture and our identity are tied to this land. And everything is connected here – the land, the water, the culture, and the people who live here. That’s not something we’re willing to give up and move away from. But we need the help of the world to save Tuvalu.”

Grace Maile, Tuvaluan climate activist speaking in a 2023 UNICEF sponsored report produced by Lasse Bak Mejlvang

Reclaimed Land explores the complex environmental relationship experienced by the people who inhabit the nine Pacific atoll-islands that make up Tuvalu – the country predicted first to become uninhabitable due to sea level rise. Estimates suggest that by 2100 95% of Tuvalu’s land will be submerged at high tide. One solution offered is an annual scheme which allows 75 Tuvaluans to migrate to New Zealand. Another is the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project (TCAP) which provides engineering solutions to protect some of the islands from sea level rise and increasing soil salinity.

The installation uses predicted inundation data from the TCAP dashboard to create patterns projected onto a cast net like the ones used by Tuvalu’s indigenous fishermen. Another mesh-like material mimics the geotextiles used in the Coastal Adaptation Project’s giant sandbags. Light diffused through this material is derived from video footage from Tuvalu as well as abstract patterns representing the sea and geological features of the islands. Apart from one synthesised drone sound, all the audio material is derived from location recordings collected in Tuvalu including church bells, singing, and sounds from nature.

All nine atoll-islands are represented by short ‘scenes’ which

randomly combine to a total duration of c.10 minutes.

Initial ideas for Reclaimed Land began at the *Re-imagining Climate (Im)mobilities in the Panicocene* conference at Durham University, May 2025.

Location sounds were recorded by Charles Rose (Chasseur de sons) and licenced from artlist.io

Bak Mejlvang, L. (2023) *The Last Generation*, Lasse Bak Mejlvang. Available at: <https://www.bakmejlvang.com/thelastgeneration> (Accessed: 6 September 2025).

Inconvenient Banana Pic 'n' Mix

Claire Diggle

Have you ever been involved in the practise of rescuing a 'well ripened' Banana? These rescued bananas are sometimes mixed with eggs, flour and sugar (maybe chocolate chips) and baked in an oven. Many are not rescued. Over ten years ago the BBC Food Programme documentary *The Banana: Fascinating History, Uncertain Future* caught my attention. Bananas travel a long way to reach the UK where they are now the most wasted household fruit according to a 2022 report.

Every banana you find in a supermarket is a Cavendish, grown using a monoculture practise that makes the variety vulnerable to extinction from a fungal infection Panama disease with no known way to stop or contain it.

Taking the form of an exaggerated Pic 'n' Mix experience, eventually collecting your single-variety banana foam sweet/s, Banana Pic 'n' Mix is designed to slow you down, draw attention to the culture of convenient consumption and the hidden stories, journeys and connections of such an everyday item.

Agreed facts?

Claire Bend, Laura Mateescu, Kirsty Styles

In April 2025, Just Stop Oil disbanded after three years of non-violent direct action done to highlight the UK's continued investment in fossil fuels. Their retirement coincided with a historic announcement - the new Labour government pledged not to issue new licences for oil and gas exploration. But this came just as 2024 was recorded as the first year when global temperatures exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels - breaching the very threshold that climate scientists have long warned will push human life on Earth beyond return.

The project captures the voices and living spaces of former Just Stop Oil activists, situating their lived experiences against the legal-political backlash and media spectacle their actions intentionally provoke. Drawing on themes of mobility and immobility, justice and injustice, it interrogates how climate protest is being policed, prosecuted and represented, and how individuals reconcile the personal costs of dissent with the urgency of addressing the breakdown of human life on Earth. At its core, this project considers the three principles of UK justice - Independence, Impartiality, Integrity - through the eyes of those criminalised for trying to get those in authority to act on scientific warnings.

Oral histories, filmed away from the frontline, ground the motivations of the activists in real life as form of knowledges in action. They share personal encounters with a legal system many will never experience, but still many become enmeshed in, and reflect on life before and after civil resistance. Their stories lay bare the clash between the self-identity of three 'normal' northern women in later adulthood, and our mediated perceptions of protest, protesters and criminals. This grounds the absurd positions people can find themselves in when they feel compelled to take action because those in authority are not.

The final output is a video essay over two screens that juxtaposes the voices and living spaces of three activists with news media coverage of Just Stop Oil that highlights the absurdities of how the system is dealing with tensions it perhaps cannot reconcile. By placing personal experiences of the contradictions in legal processes alongside mediated narratives, this exposes both the panic and even the parody in our collective response to mounting environmental crises. What is the right thing to do?

These testimonies will be preserved in the Heritage Quay archive alongside artefacts from the movement, ensuring a record that outlives headlines and court judgements.

Earth-bound

Laura Mateescu, Claire Booth-Kurpnieks, Claire Diggle and Katrina Whitehead

This project used soil chromatography to explore place, identity, and mobility. Soil chromatography is a technique used to assess soil health and vitality by analysing the patterns and characteristics of a soil sample after it has been processed with a specific solution and allowed to separate on filter paper. It is a visual method, described as creating a "picture" of the soil's composition, with different components separating into distinct zones and patterns.

Soil is considered here both as a scientific material and as a record of geographic, social, and political histories. The project examines what it means to "feel grounded" through the materiality of soil and the places to which we belong. It responds to the concept of the Panicocene (Giacomelli, 2023), in which climate change and migration are framed as overlapping crises. Visual aesthetics across media often reinforce this narrative, contributing to anxiety, othering and exclusion. The project considers soil as a medium for examining and challenging these representations.

We invited participants to work with soil chromatography and microscopy to analyse soil samples extracted from meaningful locations to them. These methods make visible the chemical and structural composition of soil, to reflect on environmental, personal, and historical contexts and their relationship to climate and (im) mobility.

Thanks to Dr Gage Ashton and Dr Katie Addinall from the School of Applied Sciences, University of Huddersfield for supporting us with the process.

Ecofeminism Under Glass: Women of Derring-Do in the Panicocene

Katrina Whitehead

My interdisciplinary practice explores the intersection of ecofeminism, archival reconstruction, and storytelling through photography, installation, and object-making. Rooted in personal and historical narratives, my work seeks to reframe women's experiences—particularly those rendered invisible by dominant cultural discourses—through imaginative acts of recovery and reinterpretation.

In *Ecofeminism Under Glass: Women of Derring-Do in the Panicocene*, I respond to the climate crisis with a series of terrariums; miniature ecosystems housed in repurposed glass containers that serve as metaphors for resilience, care, and survival. Inspired by the accidental invention of the terrarium in 1829 and the linguistic evolution of "derring-do," I embrace mistakes and misprints as generative forces in both ecological and artistic processes.

Each terrarium tells the story of a woman who has faced environmental catastrophe and emerged as an agent of change. These narratives are embedded in elemental themes of earth, water, air, and fire and reimagined through miniature landscapes populated with found objects and vintage ephemera. The work is a tactile, visual archive of ecofeminist resistance, bridging personal memory with global activism.

Through these works, I aim to shift the discourse from panic to positivity, offering small, hopeful gestures that counteract ecological despair and celebrate women's courage in the face of planetary uncertainty.

Earth: Yvonne Weekes was a survivor of a volcano eruption in Monserrat forcing her to relocate to Barbados. She now supports communities in the aftermath.

Water: Anne Bancroft, was the first woman to complete expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. Bancroft continues to support awareness of Access Water, Winter Warm-Up challenges, and global warming.

Air: Charlesetta Williams survived a massive tornado in Marion County, Texas, by sheltering in a bathtub. The tornado lifted the tub (with her inside) out of her home and deposited it in the woods,—yet she emerged uninjured and lives to share her survival story.

Fire: While competing in a marathon in Western Australia, Turia Pitt was caught up in a sudden bushfire and suffered burns to 65% of her body. Demonstrating rebirth from destruction, Pitt is now a motivational speaker for resilience and wellbeing, creating initiatives to support burn survivors.

The Worldstack_Top 20 (TWs_T20)

Nic Clear (Assistant: Hemen Galal)

The Worldstack attempts to spatialise data from the 2024 report from the International Organisation of Migration representing the top twenty countries of origin for migrants and their five destination countries, through the use of a world-map and a tower constructed of discarded materials, ad-hoc, DIY and found objects.

The Worldstack consists of two elements, a tower formed of 20 asymmetrically stacked pallets, representing the top twenty countries of origin for migrants, facing into a corner where on a curved surface is printed a world-map, using Goods Homoloxine, with the destinations of migrants from those countries. The two are connected with threads that represent the migrant channels. For each country of origin five threads link origin to the destinations.

The stack of pallets is combined into pairs, forming a series of 10 vitrines, four of which, the habitable zones, are filled with found objects and bricollaged structures and distorted objects. These zones represent a type of informal architecture that alludes to Kurt Schwitters Merzbau, Constants' New Babylon, Cedric Price's Fun Palace and Elemental's half built social housing.

The two elements of the work reflect two sides of the current system; one that is cobbled together and precarious contrasted with seemingly smooth and exact logistical mapping of the flows of migrants taken from the IOM report.

Thanks to Simon Raines and Actiform Ltd

Finding a Place for Waste: addressing infrastructure concerns in community gardens by rethinking industrial waste management pathways

Yun Gao, Manas Murthy, Hemen Galal

This project presents a design journey that reimagines the possibilities of community space, resourcefulness, and environmental stewardship. Since 2023, the Sustainable Living Research Centre (SLRC) has focused on the infrastructure, tenure, and engagement issues within community gardens across Kirklees, while simultaneously finding pathways for the better use of industrial waste and innovative end-of-life scenarios for surplus construction material. The exhibition features a scale model and a series of concept drawings for a shelter structure that integrates these key objectives within the SLRC's programming.

Several community gardens across Kirklees are managed by locally embedded and small growing groups with limited resources, capacities and equipment. This has meant that despite a pressing need for shelters, community gardens often do not have the ability to invest time, labour and money into such structures, resulting in informally and incrementally built (and at times, structurally unsound) shelters. Meanwhile, according to UK statistics on waste, amongst several materials that make up the packaging waste, wood has only a 42.4% rate of recycling, while plastic is recycled at a rate of 51%. On the other hand, data from the Timber Packaging & Packaging Confederation (TIMCON) and Forest Research suggests that the reuse and recycle of timber pallets alone may be seen as a significant gain in sustainability. Consequently, the shelter celebrates the potential for renewal found in reclaimed materials such as timber pallets. Key features of the design include, modularity, simplicity, transparency, multifunctionality, and biophilic integration.

The exhibition invites viewers to imagine the shelter not as a finished object but as an evolving framework; one that can be customized,

decorated, and adapted by those who use it. Through this, the project aspires to foster stewardship, pride, and shared authorship within community gardens.

Artist bios

Claire Bend is a Film Research Technician at the University of Huddersfield. With 15 years experience as a film producer and editor, often working with charities and not-for-profit partners to produce films for change making campaigns, Claire is interested in developing ethical film practices and widening participation in film making.

Dr Claire Booth-Kurpnieks is a Research Fellow in Cultural Ecologies at the University of Huddersfield, working at the intersection of creative health and place-based cultural development. Her recent publications include contributions to *Cultures of Creative Health* (2025) on 'Aesthetic Reflective Judgment' and transformative experience in the aesthetic encounter: experiences from a walk at Yorkshire Sculpture Park' based on her PhD thesis. Claire has co-authored research on cultural ecologies, co-creation and community-led health innovation through creative health, with a particular focus on the region of West Yorkshire. In this project she was interested in exploring how feelings of home and belonging can be mediated through material culture and matter.

Professor Nic Clear is a registered architect, filmmaker, author and curator, he is currently Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield. Professor Clear has taught across the UK and Europe as well as in the USA and Canada, in 2015 he was the inaugural Professor for Research in Visionary Cities at the Institute of Fine Arts in Vienna funded by the City of Vienna. This project marks a return to addressing speculative models of architectural production in as a response to future societal changes following 2014's 'GoldMine' and 2018's 'Chthonopolis'. The project also marks a return to physical making after a number of years of concentrating on digital films and images. Through re-use of found materials, everyday objects, and an aesthetic of DIY the installation combines a precarious tower structure containing a series of lo-fi microworlds juxtaposed with a more controlled representation of data. While the theme of migration is taken very seriously there is still room for fun

and delight in the execution of the project itself.

Claire Diggle is a practice-based PhD researcher and design lecturer at the University of Huddersfield. Her work explores spatial experience through crafted, narrative-led processes that blend digital design with tactile making. Using materials like paper, card, and references to food, her projects invite people to interact in meaningful ways. Her research is closely tied to creative pedagogy, shaping and shaped by her studio-based teaching practice.

Hemen Galal is a PhD researcher and construction professional with over 15 years of industry experience. He completed his Master's in Architecture with First Class Honours at the University of Huddersfield before pursuing doctoral research on Speculating Futures: Rethinking Social Housing through Design, Automation, and Technological Modernity. As the owner of a construction company, he brings practical expertise into his academic work, bridging practice and theory to explore how technological innovation and design can transform social housing into more inclusive, sustainable, and adaptive systems for the future.

Dr Yun Gao works as an academic and an architect. She is a Reader in Architecture, UoA13 Leader and Director of Sustainable Living Research Centre at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Huddersfield. Her academic research explores design of socially responsible and environmentally sustainable built environment, and traditional and cultural changes reflected in architectural and urban development. Yun is a Royal Institute of British Architects Chartered Architect and Architects Registration Board Registered Architect. Yun is author of more than 80 published research papers and 4 books. Yun has held a Visiting Professorship at the Yunnan Arts University in China.

Dr Laura Mateescu is a Research Fellow in Cultural Ecologies at the University of Huddersfield, as well as a curator and freelance photographer based in Huddersfield, UK. Her recent research

investigates processes of identity formation with Romanian communities in post-Brexit Britain, working in and through socially engaged photographic practice. Laura's practice is grounded in co-production, collaboration, and curatorial strategies that support place-based development. Her work has been disseminated through exhibitions in both the UK and Romania.

Dr Manas Murthy is an architect, urban designer and educator with a PhD in Architecture from the University of Oregon, USA. His doctoral work follows the emergence of a new building type called 'builder floors' in Delhi, India, as a lens to examine middle-class homemaking, speculative capital, and automobility, that are central to Delhi's post-independence development narrative. Manas has ten years of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching experience in India and the US and has led action-research projects on public space, access, and mobility. His most recent project entitled "Emerging and Sustaining Infrastructures of Care" in Scotland, examines ways in which third-sector organisations, people, and communities care for themselves and the planet.

Dr Kirsty Styles teaches Journalism at the University of Huddersfield covering ethics, law, regulation and public administration. She is also working on a research project with the news-media regulator Impress to deliver ethics training to media workers. Kirsty recently completed her PhD at the University of Lancashire, sponsored by the World Association of News Publishers, which takes a historical and critical look at the impacts of media innovation. She was previously a technology journalist and editor working in East London and beyond – where she liked to ask – 'have you ever thought about using your powers for good, rather than evil?'

Katrina Whitehead is a lecturer in Fashion Promotion and Creative Writing, teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Huddersfield since 2017. Drawing on her interdisciplinary practice in photography, her research areas include feminism within popular culture, with particular expertise

in vintage fashion and archival practices. Katrina is researching a PhD-in practice within the department of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield. Originally inspired by research into the women in her family tree, Katrina uses the archive as a source of inspiration, including family albums, letters, diaries and vintage fashion ephemera, to explore the lives of women through a creative blend of historical truth and imaginative reconstruction. Katrina has exhibited her work internationally and has presented at conferences worldwide, including engagements with the Royal Photographic Society and the Association for Art History.

Dr Stewart Worthy is a Senior Lecturer and researcher in music and a Teaching and Learning Associate at The University of Huddersfield. His research is underpinned by his background as a percussionist and informed by electroacoustic theory and practice, particularly the manipulation of pre-recorded source sounds. His recent installations involve presenting objects that causally link to the electroacoustic material experienced in the works. Projection mapping and lighting is combined with sound using both intuitive and formalised audiovisual techniques. Material for the works are often sequenced and performed in real-time and source sounds obtained using performance-based gestures. His installations are open-ended in terms of duration and often seek to identify hidden features within objects, places and the sounds associated with them.

Exhibition Curated by:

Laura Mateescu and Claire Booth-Kurpnieks

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