



Breathe[e]:LESS is an exploration by four artists of the human response to climate change threat. It concerns itself less with the science and more about what is happening in people's heads as they take on – or fail to do so – what the science is telling us.

Some of our research and material has been informed by the [Climate Psychology Alliance](#), a network of academics, artists and journalists who engage with the growing study of emotional, behavioural, cognitive and psycho-social systems which underpin our response to climate threats.

Their statement of purpose starts:

'Nothing less than a cultural transformation is needed in the direction of ecologically sustainable living to address the challenge we face. This is not alarmism, but a fact that should alarm.'

It goes on to recognize that the collaborative solutions to tackle the vast and complex challenges of human-generated climate change, biodiversity loss and damage to the global eco-system, can only be found through changes to society and individual mindsets.

'there is an urgent need to develop a perspective which emphasises the role of identities, emotions, values, conscious and unconscious meanings and defence mechanisms.'

97% of climate scientists are agreed that the planet is warming, and that it is human activity which is causing this. Scientists are supposed to be dispassionate, detached in their gathering and interpretation of data as evidence, but some are becoming deeply traumatised, depressed and emotional as human beings, by what they are finding, as a recent article disclosed:

<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a36228/ballad-of-the-sad-climatologists-0815/>

You can hear an interview by Esquire with journalist John H Richardson who wrote that article on how climate scientists are holding up, faced with the daily reality of their science.

<https://soundcloud.com/esquiremag/struggle-of-climate-scientists>

Emotion enters the fray, even amongst scientists, and it is a necessary driver to pull human will together to change, before it is too late. Going beyond the science to connect with humanity is the only real, but painful, way to engage with these things.

Of course, the emotional response is easily vilified by climate sceptics as 'hysterical' or 'alarmist'.

As part of the research for breath[e]:LESS immersion in the anti-climate science communications was needed. There are loads of videos on You-Tube that contributed to this, many of them made by Skeptic Global and The Heartland Institute.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=SME_YJgZbIQ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FKB1fzX1Eo>

Those who would deny that climate change is real, use language that can be commanding, persuasive and above all comfortable – because we'd all rather believe it's not happening wouldn't we? It can adopt the language of victimhood – of persecution, conspiracy, corruption, propaganda, bureaucracy and marginalisation – more often used by activists from the other end of the spectrum ('blocking free speech' 'closing down debate' 'tyranny of 97% consensus') which is almost beguiling. Until you look at who funds these speakers and academics: The Heartland Institute is a right wing think-tank funded by the Charles G Koch Foundation (Koch Industries are a global group of companies, primarily in the fossil fuels industry) and Exxonmobil.

Our research also included attending lectures at the Psychosocial Research Unit at University of Central Lancashire. As part of the series 'Time Matters' we were engaged by the idea of 'anticipatory mourning' as a response to climate threat, which could explain why nostalgia has become big business in western society, especially in concepts such as 'retro' and 'vintage' and the revisiting of earlier epochs through music (breath[e]:LESS references David Bowie and The Kinks).

'Often mistaken as apathy, (Lertzman 2013), anticipatory mourning is a state of mind that recognizes an inevitable coming loss before it has happened. According to Freud, this could lead to an 'aching despondency' and a longing for things to remain as they are. There might then be a nostalgia for environmental objects remaining more vital and alive in people's memory rather than in the present landscape.'

*Blog written by Tessa Gordziejko
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