

A project led by Creative Dundee,
enabled by Culture Collective



RIPPLE EFFECTS: REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING FROM CULTIVATE

Research and reporting by tialt // there is an alternative

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CONTENTS

4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5
FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

6
INTRODUCTION

7
OVERVIEW: THEORY OF CHANGE

8
OVERVIEW: PROJECT LIST

9
OVERVIEW: KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CULTIVATE
PROJECTS

10
THEME 1: POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND SYSTEMS

12
THEME 2: FUTURE MAKING AND THINKING:
OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS

14
THEME 3: INTERSECTIONALITY AND ECOLOGY

16
THEME 4: ROLE OF THE ARTIST

18
KEY IMPACTS: OVERVIEWS

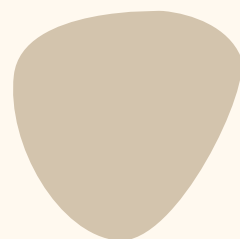
19
KEY IMPACTS ON ARTISTS FROM CULTIVATE PROJECTS

21
KEY IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES FROM CULTIVATE PROJECTS

24
CASE STUDY

26
LEARNING AND REFLECTION

28
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



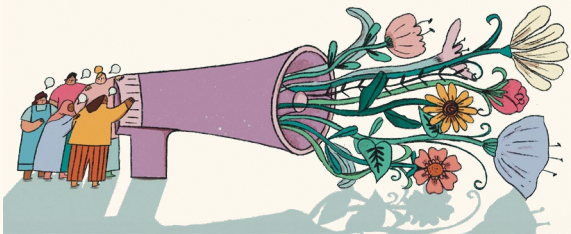
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key themes emerging across the six commissions include:



POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND SYSTEMS

Addressing unequal power dynamics and systemic inequalities impacting climate justice.



FUTURE MAKING AND THINKING

Balancing visionary future creation with practical limitations, emphasising systemic change.



INTERSECTIONALITY AND ECOLOGY

Recognising the interconnected nature of social categories in climate change impacts.



ROLE OF ARTISTS

Highlighting artists' roles in community building, storytelling, and envisioning futures.

Key learnings emphasise the importance of time for trust-building, respect in artist communities, evolving plans, safe(r) space creation, fair artist compensation, and advocacy power

Creative Dundee's role within delivering CULTIVATE was more than just supportive; they provided considered and care focussed opportunities for artists to connect to other artists, communities and the wider sector.

Their role, and the role of the Creative Climate Producer in particular, was vital in catalysing, facilitating, and sustaining the wider CULTIVATE project, interconnecting the emerging themes and providing a cohesive community for the artists and their participants.

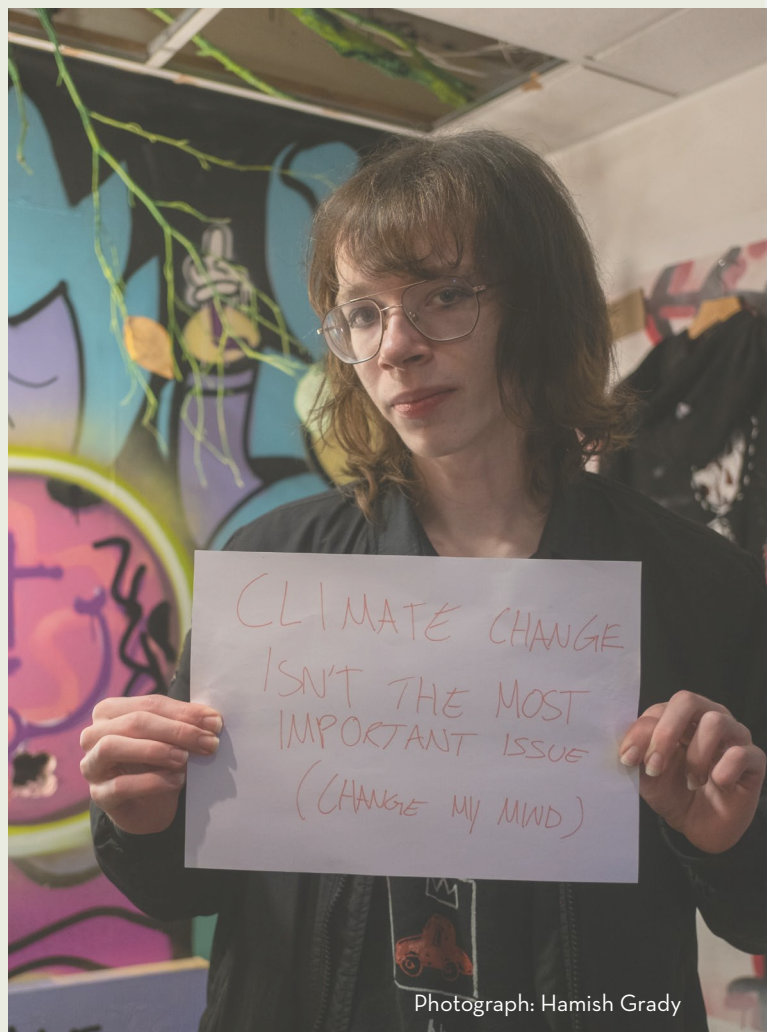


FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Future recommendations include:

- ✳ Extended project funding for deep community impact.
- ✳ Engaging groups that can have a sustainable legacy.
- ✳ Training for artists in boundary setting and trauma-informed approaches.
- ✳ Addressing the emotional weight of social engagement in art.

These insights and recommendations aim to inform future arts initiatives for social and environmental change built on the learning throughout CULTIVATE.



Photograph: Hamish Grady



INTRODUCTION

CULTIVATE was designed and led by [Creative Dundee](#) over three years and funded by Creative Scotland's [Culture Collective](#). It was a pilot project which brought together artists and community groups to explore climate justice in practical and meaningful ways. The following report explores the final year of the project, which supported six artists in the second and final phase of the CULTIVATE project.

The CULTIVATE programme aimed to enable artists to:

- ✳ Engage, create and produce locally relevant work, with a climate and social justice lens, designed collaboratively with communities;
- ✳ Develop and exchange creative, environmental, leadership and enterprise skills within a network of peers;
- ✳ Generate commissioned work, income and increase future potential opportunities.

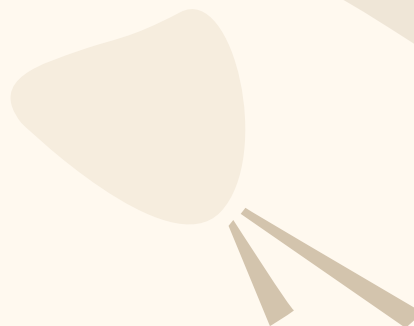
Creative Dundee is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation and CULTIVATE offered time, space and support for artists to develop their knowledge, skills and practice. CULTIVATE was delivered in collaboration with a number of partners.

The following report explores some key learning from CULTIVATE, as generated through peer learning sessions with the commissioned artists, 1-1 conversations, observations of the projects, participant feedback and explorations with the Creative Dundee team. The report seeks to provide insights into the six commissioned projects, by focussing on the artists and communities who undertook them. Whilst impacts on the people the artists worked with is explored, much of the evidence of these impacts come from the artists themselves.

This report has been written by [tialt](#)//there is an alternative who acted as a learning partner for the final six commissions of CULTIVATE. Throughout this time tialt held quarterly learning and reflection sessions with the commissioned artists, interviewed them individually about their projects and joined them throughout the year to observe and explore their work. We utilised creative methods, such as experience mapping, active listening activities, relational objects and more to develop human-centred insights into the wide ranging impacts CULTIVATE had. You can read more about our approach to the work within the appendix.

OVERVIEW: THEORY OF CHANGE

The below theory of change highlights the key inputs and impacts of the CULTIVATE project. It by no means speaks to the complexity of the work which was undertaken, or the varying impacts the project resulted in, but it does highlight how impacts occur from the initial input of CULTIVATE funding artists.



| INPUT | OUTPUT | OUTCOMES | IMPACTS |
|---|---|--|--|
| Culture Collective funding creating CULTIVATE project | <p>6 artists (in this second phase of CULTIVATE) develop socially-engaged projects across the Tay region, with participants including (but not limited to):</p> <p>Young LGBTQIA+ people</p> <p>People from the Global Majority (with artists' specifically focussing on different intersections within the Global Majority including – but not limited to – women and families and those who have experienced displacement)</p> <p>Low/no income households</p> <p>Outputs included (but are not limited to):</p> <p>Exhibitions (such as Project Echo in Perth and Dear Earth in Dundee)</p> <p>Workshops (often connected to future exhibitions, as explored here)</p> <p>Events (such as storytelling events)</p> <p>Artworks created (such as by Shona Inatimi in their 1-1 project)</p> | <p>Creating spaces for connection (during delivery of projects; exhibiting of works created during projects; artists connecting during peer sessions with CULTIVATE)</p> <p>Connecting with alternative perspectives (the artist; participants; and wider community)</p> <p>Challenging power structures</p> | <p>Skills development (both of the artist and wider community)</p> <p>Growing in confidence (both the artist and wider community)</p> <p>Fostered a sense of belonging (for participants and audiences)</p> <p>Feeling less isolated (both of the artist and participants)</p> <p>Feeling empowered (both of the artist and participants)</p> <p>Developing resilience and agency (both of the artist and participants)</p> <p>Intergenerational connections</p> |

OVERVIEW: PROJECT LIST

Below highlights the projects which were created during CULTIVATE, with short descriptions and key take-aways from each.

| PROJECT | ARTFORMS AND THEMES | KEY TAKE-AWAYS FROM THE PROJECT |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Shona Inatimi | Visual Art Shona explored using her painting practice as a space for storytelling and creating narratives through a visual language and portraiture, using the making of art as a way of communicating and connecting with others. It focussed on capturing and sharing qualities of other women from the Global Majority. Shona worked predominantly 1-1 with people. | Fostering connectivity can come from 1-1 experiences – and quality/time for interaction Peer learning is vital for artistic development Global Majority representation has a legacy within climate injustice, and this needs better addressed |
| Jaz Grady | Interdisciplinary Jaz's work explores themes of cultural identity and is rooted in the current social and political climate. Jaz created a creative hub in Perth, focussed on engaging with LGBTQIA+ young people in the community, showcasing their artistic interventions exploring climate injustice. Jaz predominantly worked in group settings. | Young people want the opportunity to share their lived experiences with their communities Young people need safe(r) spaces to feel connected and express their true identities Young people first need spaces to be themselves so they can then take part in climate focus conversation/action |
| Vinishree Verma | Interdisciplinary Vinishree's work explored the perspectives of global majority women and climate injustice. Her work culminated in an exhibition of participants' projects in Dundee. Vinishree worked in group settings, which also provided childcare and opportunities for children to take part (ensuring carers and children alike were involved). | Women from the global majority have vital perspectives on climate injustice, which are underrepresented and not taken into account by change makers Many women from the global majority Vinishree worked with do not have the tools and resources to enact change, but benefitted from having their perspectives amplified |
| Angela Gillies | Interdisciplinary Angela focussed on working with people experiencing low/no incomes. Angela's work often involved working 1-1 with people to capture their lived experiences , and she has created a cookbook, as well as other resources, drawn from participants' experiences. | Those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, and low/no incomes, struggle to make environmentally sound choices due to hidden costs |
| Amadu Khan | Storytelling Amadu focussed on working with groups who were learning English as a second language, to explore their experiences and develop storytelling with one another. | Storytelling can develop 'emotional relationality' e.g. a connection amongst people Storytelling can be an allegory for different lived experiences |
| Lu Kemp | Film Lu worked across all of the CULTIVATE projects, capturing the experiences of both artists and participants to tell the story of the project. | Lu's work highlights the interconnected-ness of the CULTIVATE projects and the overwhelming positive impact the projects have had on communities and those who have taken part |

OVERVIEW: KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM CULTIVATE PROJECTS

Across all six of the CULTIVATE projects, there were four key themes which emerged from the work. These themes highlighted the interconnected nature of the projects and their aims and ambitions, as well as the complexity of the projects themselves. These themes were developed from the learning and reflection sessions held quarterly by tialt. The four key themes emerging across all six of the CULTIVATE projects were: power, privilege and systems; future making and thinking, opportunities and limitations; intersectionality and ecology; and the role of artists. The following discusses how these themes run across all six of the projects.



Photograph: Lu Kemp



THEME 1: POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND SYSTEMS

The theme of power, privilege, and systems emerged in the conversations and reflections of the CULTIVATE projects discussed with artists and the wider CULTIVATE team. Many of the projects were either directly informed by the need to disrupt power and privilege, or experienced some impact from unequal power dynamic and capitalist systems.

Participants of projects discussed with artists the ways in which power dynamics and inequalities shape their experiences and interactions with the world, of course impacting their relationship to climate justice:

“I mean, we know this anyway, but it really does highlight how much all of these issues around social wellbeing intersect with climate change and we can’t cut one issue out from another... so that’s what we’re looking at because it is unworkable”
(Artist Quote).

“And a lot of conversations around inequalities or you know, unequal distribution of wealth, education, all these things were discussed during these three exercises, which was very surprising, I didn’t expect it, but it did come out”
(Artist Quote).

The participants of projects and artists alike highlighted the influence of capitalism and the unequal distribution of wealth as impacting their relationship, not just to the projects, but to climate justice more broadly. The conversations with artists also touched on the lack of access to technology and spaces, particularly for marginalised groups such as women, those experiencing poverty or those from racially marginalised communities.

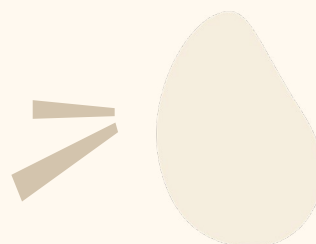
“I was working with this women’s group, there was a lot of discussion about empowering women or, you know, inequalities women have faced in that group, this also came out a lot, you know, lack of access to technology, even spaces”
(Artist Quote).

One artist highlighted how it was impossible to unweave the connection of climate justice and the legacy of imperialism. The power and privileges which were explored by artists were not just on the micro, local level, but they recognised how their work interconnected with much larger legacies of power and privilege:

“... a lot of it has to do with like, imperial power... that’s kind of the reason we’re here and like tracing back my heritage to Nigeria, like Nigeria is going to face the brunt of, or is already facing the impacts of climate change... and that’s because of imperial power, and what the whole continent of Africa has 3% of contributions like 3% of all global emissions and they’re going to face the worst of it, are already facing the worst of it, and what like, what Europe’s like contributed like the most of emissions so yeah, it just exacerbates inequalities” (Artist Quote).

The projects aimed to challenge these power structures and empower individuals to find agency within themselves and with others to develop communities and connections. Some projects encouraged agency in disrupting problematic power imbalances. The projects varied in their approaches to generating agency, with many working in groups and collectives, with two of the projects focussing on working in more intimate 1-1 ways. By creating intimate spaces for conversation and connection one project in particular sought to provide a counter to normative spaces and foster a sense of community. All the artists involved recognised the importance of including diverse voices and perspectives in conversations about climate change and future thinking.

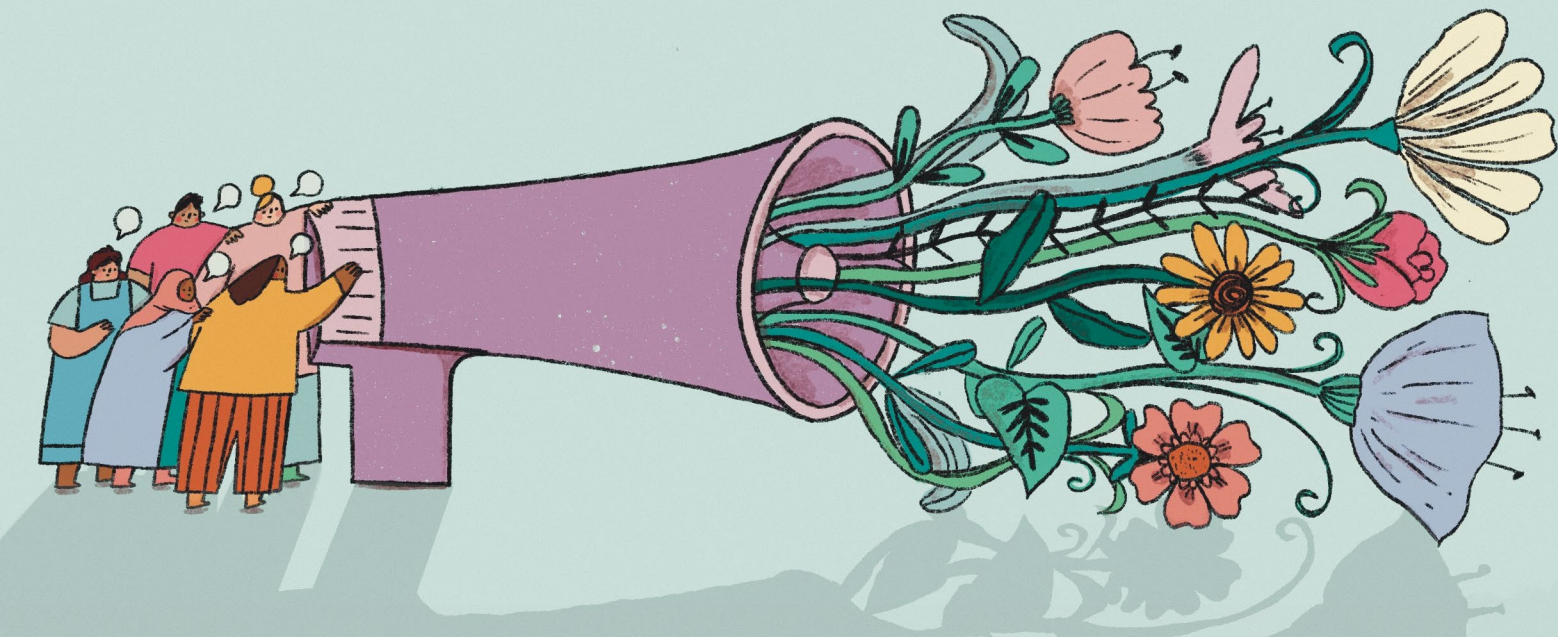
“... we feel like we don’t have power, or we don’t have agency... I’m trying to create a space for people to find that power within themselves. That they wouldn’t otherwise have” (Artist Quote).



The discussions around power, privilege, and systems emphasised the need for systemic change and the role of institutions and policies in creating a more equitable and sustainable future. Artists, and the participants who took part in their projects, recognised the importance of aligning policies with the work happening on the ground to ensure that efforts towards climate justice are not undermined. For example, one artist highlighted that the people she was working with were keen to travel in more environmentally friendly ways. However, due to the local council reducing their bus services, people had no option but to drive.

In summary, the theme of power, privilege, and systems in the projects highlights the ways in which power dynamics and inequalities shape individuals’ experiences and interactions with climate justice. The CULTIVATE projects aimed to challenge these power structures, empower individuals, and foster a sense of community. They also emphasised the need for creative thinking and the role of artists in shaping a better future. Additionally, the discussions underscored the importance of systemic change and the alignment of policies with grassroots efforts towards climate justice.

The role of the artist as an intermediary within and between systems became apparent, and the role of collective creative activity as a means by which to explore and challenge power was central to the CULTIVATE experience for all involved.



THEME 2: FUTURE MAKING

AND THINKING: OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS

The theme of future making and thinking explores the opportunities and limits of imagining and creating better futures within the CULTIVATE projects. The projects touch upon this theme, highlighting the importance of creative thinking in envisioning and working towards a more sustainable and just world, whilst recognising the limitations of future thinking for those with the least power and privilege.

One project aimed to make more people aware of climate change and climate justice. The project encouraged long-term thinking and imagining the world in the next few years. The artist behind the project started with no clear direction but gradually evolved the project over the course of nine months. The idea was to engage individuals and communities in thinking about their role in shaping the future and addressing climate change. However, the artist also recognised and discussed the limitations of the project due to the need for policy makers and politicians to enact changes, from a 'top down' rather than 'bottom up' way:

"... my opinion is that it has to be top down, rather than bottom up. Because, you know, during this project we saw so many things, for example, that Rosebank [off shore oil field] news came out... suddenly the government goes and does things that is not aligned with all the work or whatever we say, how do I justify myself? So, it's so important that the policies are aligned with the work that is happening on the ground. So, yeah, responsibility needs to be shared"
(Artist Quote).

Similarly, another artist reflected on the role of creative thinking in future imagining. They emphasised the need for artists to be part of the conversation on climate change and the creation of better futures. They highlighted that most artists have a strong ability to think creatively, see things from different perspectives, and propose innovative solutions. Two artists also discussed the importance of breaking free from conventional thinking and imagining utopian futures that challenge existing structures.

“... it’s [creative thinking] very necessary... artists need to be part of that conversation. If we’re thinking about change, and creating a better future, you need creative thinking, it’s foundational, but I feel like artists need to be in these rooms... I feel like we’re not really given much of a voice... that’s very much like politicians, they obviously have a very important role... it’s instrumental to have artists as part of this creative thinking, of thinking of a better future or the change that we need to make. Yeah, I guess, because thinking creatively, you see things that you wouldn’t necessarily see. And artists are natural problem solvers.”
(Artist Quote)

Artist’s further explored the burden placed on young people in imagining and creating better futures. One artist in particular expressed concern about institutions expecting young people to come up with solutions to climate change while not providing them with the means to make a real impact. The conversation highlights the need for a collective effort in envisioning and working towards a sustainable future, rather than placing the entire responsibility on young individuals, or those experiencing marginalisation, and the complexity of creating a legacy for projects dealing with climate justice when so much is needed from those “at the top” such as politicians.

The theme of future making and thinking also intersects with the concept of legacy. One artist reflected on the potential legacy of the projects discussing the practical outputs that could arise from the projects, such as engaging with climate change organisations, addressing community issues, and providing information to relevant stakeholders. The artist emphasised the importance of these projects going beyond artistic inquiries and contributing to tangible change in society.

Overall, the CULTIVATE projects highlight the opportunities and limits of future making and thinking in the context of climate change and creative projects. They emphasised the role of creative thinking, community engagement, and collective action in envisioning and working towards a better future. However, they also acknowledge the challenges and limitations, such as the burden placed on young people and marginalised communities, with the need for systemic changes to support creative and sustainable initiatives.



THEME 3: INTERSECTIONALITY AND ECOLOGY

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, and how they overlap and intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. In the context of ecology, intersectionality recognises that the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are not evenly distributed and that marginalised communities often bear the brunt of these effects.

The CULTIVATE projects highlight the importance of considering intersectionality in relation to ecology. For example, one project focused on marginalised women's lives and their experiences of inequalities, including lack of access to technology and spaces and how this connected to the women's agency to tackle climate injustice. This project explored the intersection of climate change and capitalism, discussing how the buying culture influenced by capitalism contributes to environmental issues. This project overtly recognised that addressing climate change requires understanding the specific challenges faced by different groups and the ways in which social inequalities intersect with ecological concerns.

“So, a lot of discussion happened about capitalism and how it has influenced them, you know, how that buying culture has developed” (Artist Quote).

The projects also touched on the lived experiences of individuals and how they shape their perspectives on ecology and climate change. For instance, one participant in a project discussed the experience of living in a flat where driving to a more affordable supermarket was necessary due to limited local options, highlighting the intersection of socioeconomic factors and access to sustainable choices.

“[participant] lives in a flat that is in an estate where she has no choice but to drive to the next town for a supermarket which is cheaper because the ones that are in the local town are unaffordable... she is being shut out of making better choices and she would make them naturally, but she can't afford to make those choices” (Artist Quote).

For some projects, the lived experience of the artists was a vital tool to meaningfully connect with the wider intersectional themes of their projects. It was reflected on by artists that their unique lived experiences often gave them opportunities to connect with participants in ways others may struggle to. At the same time, some artists discussed that they did not want to be pigeonholed because of their identities, and that whilst their identity and lived experiences offered opportunities to connect with some communities, that it was key to not flatten artistic expressions through only focussing on identity.

Another artist shared their experience of feeling disconnected from nature, or from Scotland more broadly, and the challenges of reconciling their heritage with the impacts of climate change with their heritage (which in part informed their artwork entering a dialogue with portrait sitters and their Scottish surroundings), and the heritage of the participants they worked with.

***“I guess there’s a shared experience that kind of pulls us together, feeling like we’re born in Scotland, but we don’t necessarily feel Scottish. And it’s like something they kind of have to reconcile with. They were always asked, like, what, where are you from? And then you say you’re from - I say, I’m from Dundee - They have this puzzled look on their face... it’s difficult to see that connection with climate justice because... a lot of it has to do with imperial power. Like, that’s kind of the reason we’re here... and tracing back my heritage to Nigeria”
(Artist Quote).***

The intersectionality of these projects extends beyond individual experiences to consider broader systemic issues. The artists emphasised the need for inclusive and equitable approaches to addressing climate change, recognising that different groups may have unique lenses and approaches to ecological issues. This includes engaging with organisations and institutions to ensure that policies and actions are aligned with the needs and perspectives of marginalised communities.

In summary, the discussions on intersectionality and ecology highlight the importance of recognising the interconnected nature of social categorisations and their impact on ecological concerns. These projects emphasised the need for inclusive and equitable approaches to addressing climate change, considering the specific challenges faced by different groups and engaging with organisations to create meaningful change. By centring intersectionality and theory, these projects created spaces for connection, conversation, and collective action towards a more just and sustainable future.



THEME 4: ROLE OF THE ARTIST

The role of the artists within the CULTIVATE projects is multifaceted and encompasses various aspects such as creativity, community building, storytelling, and envisioning better futures. The artists involved in these projects play a crucial role in creating spaces for conversation, connection, and collaboration. They provide opportunities for individuals to engage creatively and express themselves in ways that may have been limited or restricted in other contexts. Through their work, some of the artists aimed to nourish and empower participants, allowing them to explore different forms of artistic expression and engage in conversations around important themes such as climate change, inequalities, and social justice.

“...to have those connections and to feel like those connections might spread far... their relationships and interest... they’re hopping through connections together... But I think there’s something really interesting about how you forge connections between women of colour... how that’s the space of creation, to create space for conversation”
(Artist Quote).

For some of the artists, creating connectivity across their project was informed by art and food, especially for those who spoke English as a second language:

“You know, having that element of food in the session... they have strong connections with their food, and the cultural practices, and it came out a lot in their stories. English is definitely not their first language. But food and art was a very common language, you know, the moment I used food to introduce things to do, they would just get started... you’ll see it coming along together in the exhibition”
(Artist Quote).

One of the key roles of the artists was to facilitate dialogue and create safe(r)* and intimate spaces for participants to share their stories and experiences. One artist invited individuals to their studio and held one-on-one conversations before painting their portrait, the artist fostered connections and built relationships that go beyond the artistic process. These interactions allow for the exploration of personal narratives, the sharing of marginalised voices, and the amplification of stories that are often overlooked or minimised. It is also important to note that this particular project focussed on supporting 1-1 interactions, unlike many of the other CULTIVATE projects which worked with larger groups of people. This suited the needs of the artist undertaking the project, and there is a need to recognise the role of artists within CULTIVATE as connecting to not just the needs and expectations of the communities they worked with, but with their own needs and expectations as artists and creatives. Expected 'models of engagement' between artists and communities should remain flexible.

What each project needed, could only emerge over time and the artists recognised that projects required time and space for the needs and expectations of all involved to emerge:

***“So I started with no clue, you know, what to do and where this project would head, but slowly, slowly, this has evolved”
(Artist Quote).***

The projects also highlighted the need for creative thinking and the role of artists in shaping better futures. Artists were seen as essential participants in conversations about climate change and that they should be part of the decision-making processes. However, it was acknowledged that artists often face challenges in having their voices heard and their perspectives valued.

In summary, the artists within these projects served as facilitators, storytellers, and creative thinkers. They created spaces for connection and conversation, produced artworks that reflect the experiences of participants, and contributed to the envisioning of better futures. Their role was essential in fostering creativity, community, which could potentially lead to positive social change.

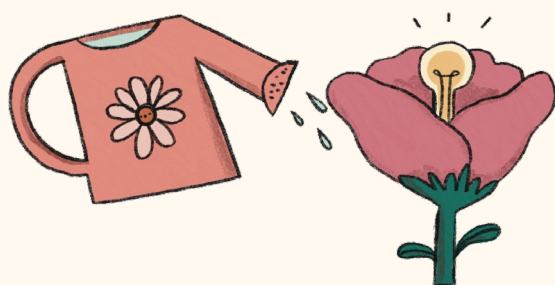
* artists recognised that there could never be the creation of a completely safe space, but that their projects often attempted to create safer spaces.



Photograph: Lu Kemp

KEY IMPACTS: OVERVIEWS

The following section explores the key impacts for two different groups:



ARTISTS

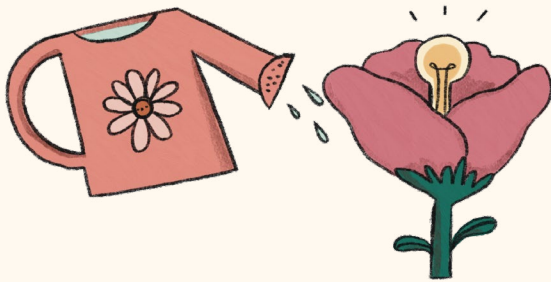


COMMUNITIES

It aims to highlight the breadth, depth and variety of impacts experienced by those involved in CULTIVATE. Of course, there are wider impacts and the ripple effect of CULTIVATE, such as raising awareness of climate injustice to those outside of the two groups described here, such as arts funders, is not discussed in depth. It is important to recognise that whilst we have captured key impacts for these two groups above, that there will likely be future impacts than those being described and explored below.

KEY IMPACTS ON ARTISTS

FROM CULTIVATE PROJECTS



For many of the artists, CULTIVATE provided the **time and space to develop new skills**. Both artistic skills and community focussed skills. For some it was the development of skills they already had, for others it was developing new skills they hadn't engaged with before which can be identified as a form of professional development. For many of the artists the opportunity to develop new skills **resulted in growing confidence** within their artistic practices, and developing ambitions for future work.

“I’ve experimented and evolved. And now, if you ask me, I’m in a better place more confident about you know, I use this tool, it will generate these kinds of conversations. And I did that, I showed you some things that I had planned, but the discussion that happened was very different, the output was different. So yes, I think I have improved or evolved my practice”
(Artist Quote).

“I’ve grown as a designer, and I’m more confident of the concepts... and I will continue to work in this space... I would love to do the same project but with different communities... members with decision making roles... able to make change with power and take them on a similar journey”
(Artist Quote).



Photograph: Lu Kemp

For the artists, this skills development could only have happened due to the time and space the CULTIVATE project offered them, as well as the support provided by the Creative Dundee Creative Climate Producer:

*“... from the point of view of teaching me a new art form, it’s been unbelievably useful... It’s a ridiculous gift to be given six months, to very slowly and painfully make a huge number of mistakes... you have to learn it yourself”
(Artist Quote).*

Other artists also discussed the time and space needed for skills development, with one talking about skills exchanges between herself and another artist, and the need for time to experiment:

*“I was kind of experimenting with my process and trying to work out how I would approach this ... So it felt quite natural to be with her... we made collage together. But that was what we just kind of did that for fun. That wasn’t like part of this project, really... And that was the first project I did was painting from life... That was quite challenging... I really struggled with that painting... I didn’t feel like I captured her the way I wanted to... I think that made me realise I need to spend more time having a conversation and making before I actually just delve into the portrait side of it and then, the second person I worked with... She’s also a portrait painter... we learn quite a lot from each other and gain insight into her or different approaches to portrait painting”
(Artist Quote).*

*“...in terms of really definable positive impact on the artists... I think it has been really useful to [the artists’] practice, I think they can articulate something about a practice, which they couldn’t before”
(Artist Quote).*

Many artists talked about learning from the project, much of which is explored within the learning and reflection section of this report. However, broadly speaking many artists discussed learning about:

- ✳ the time needed to undertake work focussing on working with communities that are often underrepresented within the arts;
- ✳ the importance of connecting with other artists to connect and develop a support network;
- ✳ and the role of connecting with gatekeepers and the time needed to do so.

For a lot of the artists, CULTIVATE gave them the opportunity to develop their practices, and develop connections within their communities:

“... gave me opportunity to make more connections especially with the people that I’ve been meaning to make connections with, so it’s helped me give me more agency to make these connections and build on that and hopefully build community from that” (Artist Quote).

For one artist in particular, they learned about the **value of connecting with other artists**, engaging in skill sharing, and **building a supportive artistic community**. These connections provided opportunities for learning, growth, and the exchange of ideas and perspectives.

KEY IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES

FROM CULTIVATE PROJECTS



There are several impacts for communities that can be observed across the projects. It is important to note that these impacts are gathered, predominantly, from the perspectives of the artists' delivering CULTIVATE projects, to be able to reflect on the longer-term impacts CULTIVATE may have generated it would be necessary to meet with the communities the artists' worked with several months from the projects' completion.

Creating spaces for connection and community emerged as a positive impact from the CULTIVATE project. Many of the projects aimed to provide spaces for people to connect, commune, and share their stories. This **fostered a sense of belonging** and support within the community, allowing **individuals to feel less isolated and more empowered**. Projects which provided visible spaces, such as in [Project Echo](#), benefited greatly from their location on local high streets as communities felt projects were embedded and accessible.

*“I was working with this women’s group, there was a lot of discussion about empowering women or, you know, inequalities women have faced in that group... but just being in that space, the women were so excited”
(Artist Quote).*



Photograph: CULTIVATE

For many of the young participants involved in a project in Perth, these spaces for connections allowed for them to express their true identities, resulting in feeling safe. This was especially important for those who are LGBTQIA+:

“I was like something is going on in there and I poked my head in... I just felt super at home here... I found my space... I found my safe space... it's a place I can just be comfortable being myself, that's what it is for me... finding this place I can just come in and be me... I don't need to hide who I am around anybody”
(Young Participant Feedback).

“Actually something my mum said to me last night, I phoned her when I got home... I was like sorry I didn't actually really get to talk to you or anything (at the exhibition), and she said no it was fine you were being you... my mum said something to me about three months ago, around about the time I started coming here, and it was pretty much the exact opposite of that and it was quite nice to hear”
(Young Participant Feedback).

CULTIVATE positively impacted a wide range of people in communities, including community organisers and those who worked with community groups. As one community organiser noted:

“I have learned to be patient... and to put trust in other people... she [the artist] never loses her patience... she handles situations with so much coolness... I have started to let go of so many pressures [as a result]...”
(Community Organiser Quote).

Some of the projects focussed on amplifying the voices and experiences of marginalised groups, such as women, young LGBTQIA+ people, people from the global majority, and those with limited access to resources due to socioeconomic barriers such as poverty. By sharing these stories, the projects aimed to **challenge power structures** and bring **attention to issues that are often overlooked**. The projects' emphasised the role of **creative thinking in envisioning better futures** and addressing climate change. By engaging in creative activities and conversations, participants were encouraged to think critically about the world they want to create and the actions they can take. Much of this connected to themes of addressing intersectionality and ecological justice.

One poem, written by a participant of Amadu Khan's project spoke to the theme of challenging power structures and the intersectionality of ecological justice:

It's political

Another thing, I think!
All is political. This is very important. That's why I thinking voting is very important.

Can you vote in Scotland?
Not for the general election
But for the council and Scottish parliament?
I can.

Why do you think voting is important for climate action?
The people with power are men, white men.
If we vote people that love every people,
black, white, and feminist.
If you vote people who fight for anti-racism and feminism, then that's good.
If you vote for these people, you will help to save the planet and things will get better.

Through their work, the projects aimed to **build community resilience and agency**. By creating spaces for connection, sharing resources, and supporting each other, communities could potentially become more resilient in the face of challenges, and have developed the agency to engage with issues of climate injustice that impact them, both at a local and national level.

“And that is what the exhibition will portray... how the women have taken the lead, how the women are talking about their learnings and their exploration during the project, and how eventually, they have taken the role of climate champions. So, the exhibition is the end point where, I’m assuming, but hopefully we will have these climate champions who will start taking the lead”
(Artist Quote).

The work of artist Jaz Grady, for example, focussed on creating a hub for young LGBTQIA+ people in Perth, and the responses from participants reflects the importance of creating spaces for connection and the agency, knowledge, and connection that came from having a creative space.

“I was like WOW - there was like 40 people...it was crazy... they were like “oh I am getting emotional”... I’m already ready to cry... I saw that person talking to their friends, and talking about different pieces...”
(Young Participant Feedback).

“My relationship to nature... really put some different things in perspective from it... thinking of yourself as part of the ecosystem has changed my perspective”
(Young Participant Feedback).

“It was unexpected... that climate change wasn’t considered the most important problem by people... that was difficult but good to know”
(Young Participant Feedback).



Photograph: Lu Kemp

The young participants’ responses reflect that by creating spaces for connection, they were exposed to one another’s unique perspectives and had opportunities to explore and expand on these. Young people, in Jaz’s project, were also given the opportunity to exhibit artworks they had created in their creative hub allowing **local audiences to engage with their experiences and perspectives**. Again, an exchange of perspectives leading to developing cross-community and **intergenerational connections**, even being exposed to difficult positions (such as some audiences not considering climate injustice a priority) was highlighted as important by the young participants.



Photograph: Holly Quinn

CASE STUDY

The following case study explores one project in depth, to reflect on the key themes emerging from CULTIVATE and some key impacts for the artist and the communities the artist worked with throughout:

[Vinishree Verma](#) is a designer and artist passionate about the circular economy, climate, and environment design. She brought along a trans-disciplinary pool of experience through research, co-design methodologies, and design thinking. Her creative journey has evolved over 17 years of working as an industrial designer, design mentor, and service designer. Vinishree has a proficient background in design and community-engagement projects and artistic flair for working in multiple mediums for creative expression.

Vinishree's project aimed to develop [climate champions](#) within Dundee, specifically supporting women from the global majority and their families to engage with climate justice approaches through creative interventions. Vinishree's work culminated in an exhibition and series of events in Dundee in October 2023.

Vinishree's project on climate change and inequalities has shed light on the power dynamics and privilege that exist within society. Through her workshops and conversations with various groups, she has uncovered the unequal distribution of wealth, access to technology, and educational opportunities. Vinishree's project has provided a platform for marginalised voices, particularly women, to share their experiences and perspectives on climate change. By creating a safe(r) space for dialogue, Vinishree has enabled these women to challenge the systems that perpetuate inequalities and advocate for climate justice. Her project has highlighted the need for systemic change and the role that power and privilege play in perpetuating environmental and social injustices.

Vinishree's project has encouraged participants to think long-term and imagine a future in which climate change and inequalities are addressed. Through creative workshops, Vinishree has facilitated conversations and reflections on the opportunities and limits of future thinking. Participants have explored concepts such as sustainable consumption and production, circular economy, and biomimicry. Vinishree's project has empowered individuals to become climate champions and take action towards a more sustainable future. However, she also acknowledges the challenges and limitations of individual efforts and emphasises the need for policies and systemic change to create a lasting impact.

Vinishree's project has embraced intersectionality and recognised the importance of diverse perspectives in addressing ecological issues. She has worked with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, languages, and age groups, allowing for a rich exchange of ideas and experiences. By incorporating creativity and art, Vinishree has provided a platform for participants to express their unique lenses and understandings of ecology and climate change. The project has highlighted the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues, addressing topics such as greenwashing, access to resources, and the impact of capitalism. Vinishree's work has demonstrated the need for inclusive and holistic approaches to ecology that consider the diverse experiences and voices within society.

Overall, Vinishree's project has been a catalyst for conversations, reflections, and actions related to climate change and inequalities. By addressing themes of power, privilege, future making, and intersectionality, she has created a space for individuals to explore their roles as climate champions and envision a more sustainable and just future. Through her work, Vinishree has highlighted the importance of systemic change, top-down policies, and inclusive approaches in addressing the complex challenges of climate change and inequalities. As a result Vinishree has been invited to share learning from her project through conferences.



Photograph: Lu Kemp

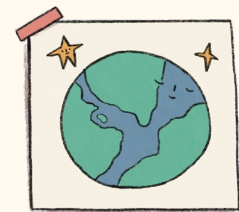
LEARNING AND REFLECTION

Much of the learning from CULTIVATE connects with the broader learning that [Culture Collective gathered in a manifesto in 2023](#). These include, but are not limited to: taking time and working slowly with communities to develop trust; trust and respect underpin all artistic activities; letting plans evolve over time; understanding that safe(r) spaces are created and not declared; artists being paid fairly; power being used to advocate for others. However, CULTIVATE also offers other learning, drawn from the projects, which is useful for future working and considerations. All of this learning reflects the need for meaningful and robust long-term funding for projects similar to CULTIVATE in order to deliver positive impacts, both for communities and artists alike:



TIME

Whilst time is crucial in providing slow working with communities to develop trust and confidence, it was reflected on by artists that time is also crucial within the operational aspects of projects: for artists that opened physical spaces, it took a long time to find spaces and to navigate the bureaucratic aspects of renting a space. And whilst the Culture Collective manifesto emphasises time as important in developing trust, it is also important when developing new communities of practice. Even the practical task of maintaining relationships was not just about developing trust over time, but having the time to maintain connections. Going for cups of tea, responding to emails, connecting with people when they were available all required time. It is clearly critical that future funding takes into account the time needed to deliver projects like CULTIVATE, with extended funding available for long-term projects.



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Whilst all of the artists in CULTIVATE worked within their local communities, many found it imperative to work with pre-existing groups. This also meant that group connections were not lost when CULTIVATE finished. Artists identified it was important that the legacy of their work could be maintained by groups, and this was partly down to groups being able to stay connected.

Furthermore, many artists reflected that connecting with community connectors was incredibly useful, as it develops trust with community groups, but also develops longer-term working relationships. Again, resulting in meaningful legacies such as future working opportunities with groups.

BOUNDARIES



Artists reflected that working in socially engaged ways makes setting boundaries difficult. Artists developed deep connections with the people they were working with, as well as other artists in the CULTIVATE projects. However, this can result in participants expecting a lot from projects, or sharing personal and intimate details with artists. Due to the emotional nature of the work, some of the artists in CULTIVATE discussed giving the communities they were working with time and energy that was not necessarily paid for. One artist also discussed the complexity of working with a friend, who supported their activities, but who did not deliver on their commitments.

One possibility to curb the pushing of artists' boundaries during socially engaged arts projects, is funders and commissioning bodies providing artists with thorough training, such as trauma informed approaches to working, child safety and reporting procedures, contract guidelines and even boundary coaching. Whilst the Culture Collective Manifesto provides artists and organisations foundational, values-led, insights in working with communities, there is a clear need for practical guidelines and procedures to ensure artists don't push their boundaries.

EMOTIONAL WEIGHT OF PROJECTS



As the boundaries of projects suggest, there was often an emotional weight to the projects, which some artists reflected as being complex. One artist discussed the emotional distress at having lower numbers than anticipated visit their exhibition of participants' work, another discussed how the weight of managing people's expectations was complex, with another artist sharing frustration at the lack of engagement by "higher up" people in the arts and environmental sectors with the projects. The artists all clearly cared deeply about the communities and people they were working with, and wanted to ensure they amplified their voices as best they could. All of the artists valued the Creative Dundee team's support, but also recognised the emotional weight of their projects needed to be somewhat shared.

Again, training artists in certain practices (such as boundary setting, youth work practices) could allow them to develop tools and techniques to manage the emotional weight of the projects. Furthermore, peer learning opportunities and the opportunity to connect with a coach, councillor, or mentor may support artists in their journeys. It is clear that funders and grant giving organisations build in opportunities for artists to connect with their peers and others to share the emotional weight of socially engaged practices.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following explores key observations from Tialt's time as learning and reflection partners. It pulls together some concluding thoughts and recommendations drawn from the CULTIVATE project.

It is key that expected 'models of engagement' between artists and communities should remain flexible, which has implications for both practitioners but also funders and commissioning organisations. How can projects work iteratively and flexibly if impacts and aims of projects are detailed in advance? It is important for funders to consider the possibility of project aims and ambitions, as well as outcomes and impacts, changing over time and offering funding opportunities which are not restrictive, but open-ended in nature.

Across projects, artists emphasised the need for creative thinking and the role of artists in shaping a better future. The artists' recognised that both their insights and skills can be utilised to support communities to shape future approaches in tackling the climate emergency. The challenge for those funding projects like CULTIVATE is how to support practical and applied legacies from what can only be considered, vital, but first stage work. What could the Scottish Government be doing to embed artists and communities alongside scientists and industry to collectively imagine shared futures according to the knowledge and skills of all who will be part of them?

Furthermore, it is possible that cultural funding and policy still focuses more on 'artworld' artists and audiences than socially engaged practitioners, potentially to the detriment of most of those funding cultural policy (i.e., 'communities'). The insights gained from participants during the CULTIVATE projects offer unique, local, perspectives on the climate crisis. How can these perspectives be centred by policy makers and organisations in the future and not downgraded or forgotten about? Policy makers and organisations must collect and recognise the important work happening in projects, to allow participants' perspectives to be effective.

It is perhaps obvious to suggest that climate justice and sustainability are political. What these projects have shown is that working with artists through a creative process has brought discussions around philosophy, sociology, history, and economics to the fore. As with the other core themes showcased in this report, it highlights how we should consider climate justice (and action) through not only an intersectional lens, but an interdisciplinary lens. Just as policy makers must engage with the work being produced within socially engaged practices, they must also engage with interdisciplinary insights.

Finally, the CULTIVATE project has provided invaluable insights into the intersection of art, community, and climate justice. The key learnings emphasise the importance of time for trust-building, respect in artist communities, evolving plans, safe(r) space creation, fair artist compensation, and advocacy power. The project has underscored the significance of extended funding for deep community impact. Tialt found the emotional weight of social engagement in art and the need for support mechanisms for artists is vital to take into consideration for future projects. The CULTIVATE project has not only fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment within communities but has also emphasised the role of artists in shaping a better future. The insights and recommendations from CULTIVATE are poised to inform future arts initiatives for social and environmental change, building on the project's learnings and reflections.

APPENDIX

Tialt took on the role of learning partner for this iteration of CULTIVATE. They supported Creative Dundee and the commissioned artists to consider and reflect throughout the projects. In initial conversations with the CULTIVATE artists and wider team, tialt explored what 'success' would look and feel like within projects, and discovered success meaning lots of different things to lots of different people. However, most often it did not relate to the numbers of attendees but instead to the qualitative aspects of projects as experienced by the artists and participants.

Within early reflection sessions tialt began to consider the work of CULTIVATE as an ecology, a landscape, or maybe even a river (perhaps even the River Tay). This ecology has fed into the overall design of the report reflecting on the work of CULTIVATE, but was also used as an invaluable tool to explore learnings from artists' projects as they were happening. Throughout group learning and reflection sessions (four in total), tialt revisited the learning landscape with artists and the wider CULTIVATE team.

Below is an example of this landscape 'framework' in action, when tialt tasked artists to conceptualise of their projects within the wider CULTIVATE ecology:



Creative Dundee's ambition

The ambition was to pioneer a model which resourced Creative Practitioners and Communities across the Tay region to navigate climate justice through creativity and community connection. CULTIVATE was designed and led by Creative Dundee, enabled by Culture Collective over 2021 - 2023.

Why this approach?

As a new initiative which launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued through the recovery period, CULTIVATE provided commissions and community engagement to enhance local activities, foster skills and confidence for stronger community cohesion. The project's design focused deeply on people and place, our starting point was:

- ✳ Communities are place experts, with strengths, connections, experiences and a hyper-local understanding of their place.
- ✳ The Tay region features urban cities, small towns and rural villages - communities are interconnected, yet the region is geographically, socially and economically distinctive.
- ✳ Marginalised communities are most likely to face the impact of the climate emergency.
- ✳ Creative Practitioners with socially engaged practices are adept at facilitating engaging, creative spaces for people to come together, imagine and act.

CULTIVATE's core activities

1. Creative Practitioner key commissions in Dundee, Angus, Perth & Kinross, and North East Fife. Two open call rounds, with 6 and 10 month freelance commissions available.

- ✳ **Round one:** seven Creative Practitioners were resourced with 6 month freelance contracts, for 50 days from August 2021 - February 2022. Creative Practitioners responded to briefs initiated by 6 community organisations across the region. Emerging and established artists researched, developed and generated creative responses through deep engagement with the host organisation's community. COVID-19 restrictions were still in place over this period - so activities were held mostly remotely or in very small, restricted group settings.
- ✳ **Round two:** six Creative Practitioners were resourced with 10 month freelance contracts, for 75.8 days from January - October 2023. Creative Practitioners responded to commissions to collaborate with specific marginalised communities to support them to imagine, vision, co-develop and embed creative responses locally. COVID-19 restrictions were no longer in place, however public confidence to meet in person understandably needed to be rebuilt.*

Within both commission periods, the Creative Practitioners had:

- ✳ Allocated budgets for costs relating to access, production, community engagement, experimentation and collaboration with other practitioners.
- ✳ Time together to share their learning, reflect on their experiences to develop understanding of harnessing creativity as a way of engaging communities in climate justice, across the region.
- ✳ Commissions via open processes included information sessions, briefing packs, short application processes in the applicant's preferred format recognising applications can be unpaid labour, with external panellists involved in selection, interview questions shared with candidates in advance, and stipend payments for shortlisted candidates.

CULTIVATE was iterative by design, with review, reflection and redesign built in throughout to improve the pilot project as it evolved during/post pandemic times.

Over the project, across the Tay region:

81 Creative Practitioners were commissioned.

£310,000 was invested into Creative Practitioners and Communities.

2. Community engagement

CULTIVATE's typographic identity was the first creative commission and embodied our themes of community, creativity and climate. Thoughtfully designed by designer/artist/musician, Tommy Perman, it is based on the shapes of support structures that are used across the Tay region's landscape. Tommy created a visual framework with the generous idea that local illustrators could then be commissioned to playfully interpret the distinctive identity as the project grew.

With this initial co-design tone set, the direction of our community engagement also evolved through many forms and shapes, always collaborative, open and generative:



- ✳ Collaborated with UNBOSI and ScrapAntics to deliver free outdoor family-friendly workshops across Dundee, using interactive marble runs built from reclaimed materials to reimagine our neighbourhoods together.
- ✳ Generated 102 inspiring online features, case studies across the Tay region, with podcasts, talks, films, media features and study trips.
- ✳ Created PechaKucha Night Dundee Vol 28 during COP26 with 11 speakers and 450 attendees focused on the care and sustainability of our planet.
- ✳ Co-produced the Tayside Climate Beacon Event Series with Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre, hosting three free events in Arbroath, Dunkeld and Dundee, focused on platforming locally rooted arts/climate enablers and sharing ideas and activities across the region.
- ✳ Piloted a cross-sector field trip with scientists and artists with Tayside Climate Beacon, Abertay University and the University of Dundee/Festival of the Future, and created a summer paid student internship opportunity.
- ✳ Supported Creative Practitioners and communities to co-design and deliver 15 of their own community events and showcases.
- ✳ Engaged in local climate network activities with Dundee's Climate Leadership Group and Sustainable Dundee, also hosted visiting delegations from Scottish Parliament and the Climate Change Committee with Dundee City Council.
- ✳ Creative Climate Producer, Claire Dufour actively took part in the Culture Collective network events to enable vital sharing of socially engaged practices across Scotland.

Over the project, across the Tay region:

2,132 people were engaged.

28 partners were engaged.

Project legacy

Beyond the work outlined within tialt's report from the second stage of commissions, CULTIVATE's highly collaborative approaches have been acknowledged alongside fellow third sector climate groups in Dundee by committees and policymakers, included in reports by the Climate Change Committee and Scottish Parliament's Net Zero Committee**.

Within a creative economy context, CULTIVATE was highlighted in the UK's Creative Industries Sector Vision 2023 paper, under "Goal 3: Wider Impact of the Creative Industries", Circular Communities & Creative Scotland report: "Circular Economy in the Creative Industries" and in Culture Collective's: "Our Voices: A Diverse Artists Guide", highlighted as an example of good everyday practice.

Creative Dundee is committed to ensuring that Creative Practitioners and Communities are resourced and supported to bring their strengths and skills to complexity. As an organisation which is always in the process of expanding our understanding, we have learned a great deal from CULTIVATE and are now applying the practices across our work, and as part of an innovative community-led project, Dundee Changemakers Hub from 2024 onwards.

Dundee Changemakers Hub is being designed and delivered by five social enterprises, led by Transition Dundee, including The Maxwell Centre, ScrapAntics, Uppertunity and Creative Dundee enabled by the Scottish Government's Climate Action Hub network. Visit: dundee-changemakers.net

CULTIVATE has been a significant catalyst project for Creative Dundee, enabling our organisation to demonstrate the potential when trust is placed in small, yet capable, well networked organisations. We're grateful to Culture Collective, funders, partners, Creative Practitioners and Communities for their belief and support throughout.

Notes:

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National Evaluation of the Culture Collective programme, extract:

"Looking back on the first phases of the work we are seeing that these projects were at the forefront of post-Lockdown opening up. They experienced challenges during that uncertain period of Lockdown, but were unquestionably of great value in mobilising rapidly to provide opportunities for communities to come together again, socialise and create as well as responsive approaches to local needs."

Report by Queen Margaret University, March 2023

**

Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, extract:

"In Dundee, we had a presentation from, and discussion with, representatives of diverse groups of community bodies taking part in the city's - and the wider areas - journey to net zero. The discussion touched on the role of art, activity, travel, recycling, nature and other matters. It was an important reminder of two matters:

Most community groups working in the broad area of 'net zero' are in practice making a two-for-one contribution: they are delivering carbon savings as an additional benefit of projects about food, money-saving, cycling, community cohesion, mental or physical health, etc. In so doing, they can generate the success stories, inspiration and positivity that can instigate and maintain support for climate action.

Small-scale net zero-themed community projects will never be an alternative to the large-scale investment and intervention we need to decarbonise housing, energy or public transport, but they are complementary to it. They humanise the overall journey to net zero and secure public buy-in. In that respect, they are equally necessary."

Report: The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland, January 2023



About:

Creative Dundee centres creative practitioners and communities as powerful catalysts for collective good. We facilitate collaboration, nurture collective leadership and support people to imagine and act together to benefit our communities and place.
Visit: creativedundee.com

Culture Collective is a network of participatory arts projects across Scotland, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations. Funded by the Scottish Government through Creative Scotland.
Visit: culturecollective.scot



Acknowledgements:

Creative Dundee thanks everyone who has been involved in pioneering CULTIVATE: Creative Practitioners, Communities, and Partners across the Tay region.

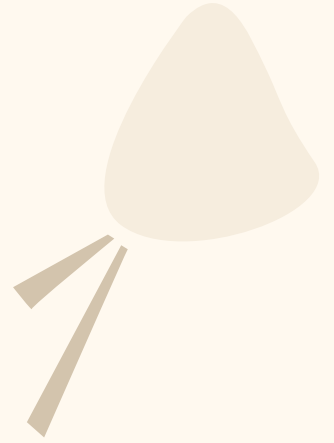
CULTIVATE Identity: Tommy Perman.

Report Illustrations: Chloe Gardiner.

Report Photography: Hamish Grady, Holly Quinn and Lu Kemp.

Report Learning Partner and Design: tialt//there is an alternative.

CULTIVATE enabled by: Creative Scotland, Culture Collective, Dundee City Council and Perth & Kinross Council.



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