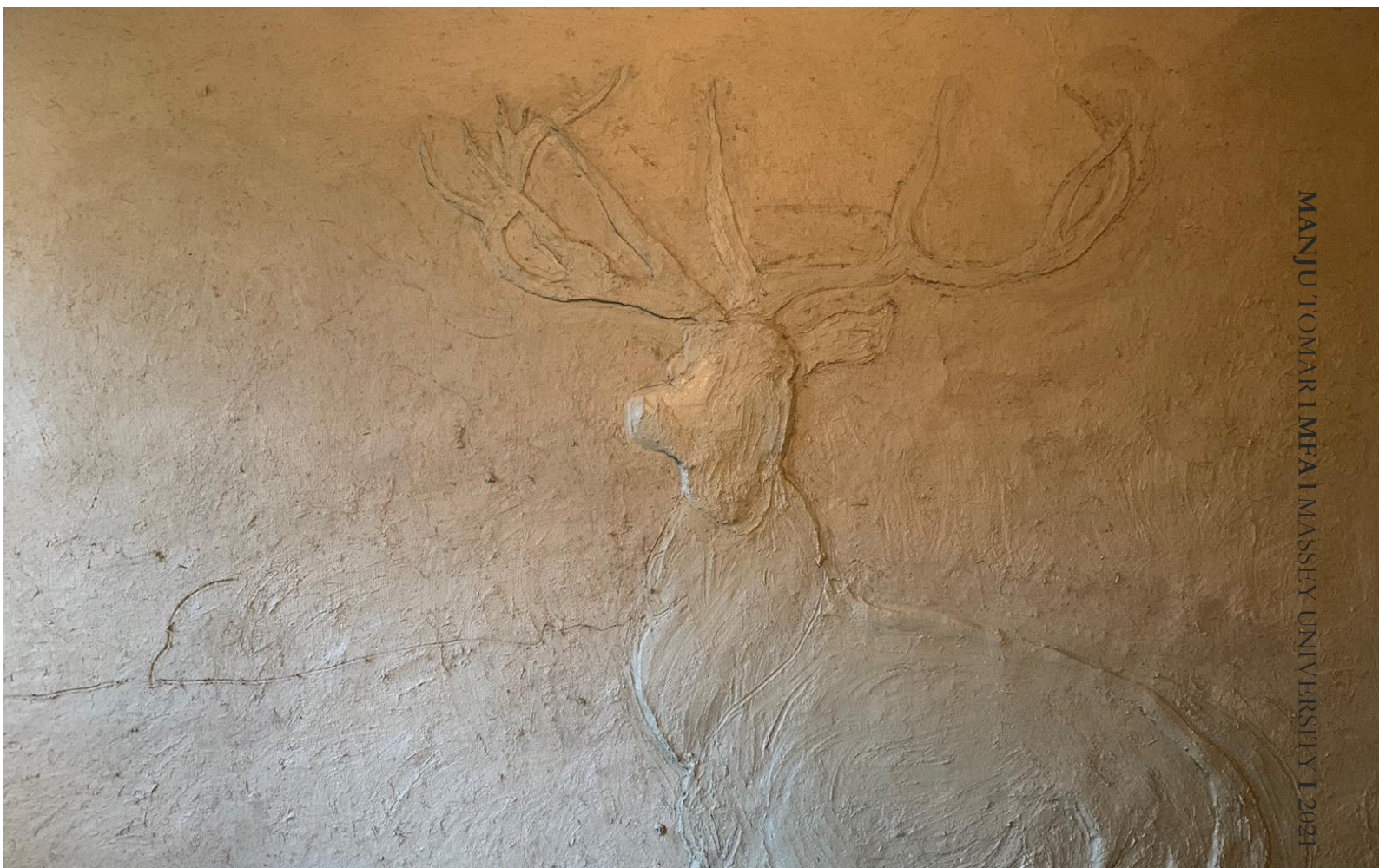


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# WEAVING EARTH STORIES

*Practicing art sustainably and collaboratively with community and cow dung*



An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of Master of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

2021



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# WEAVING EARTH STORIES

Practicing art sustainably  
and collaboratively with  
community and cow dung

## ABSTRACT

This exegesis is a record of my MFA journey, in a new country, in a phase of my practice that had already matured to a degree where I was clear what direction and conscious choices I wanted to pursue as an artist and a human on this planet.

Before migrating from India to New Zealand, I had determined that cow dung was a material in abundance with many redeeming properties. While this material is extremely significant to me and the culture I grew up in, it is strangely regarded as a waste or a nuisance in NZ. A paradox emerged: New Zealand's problem with cow manure offers its own solution using traditional craft knowledge that I brought with me.

The thesis project developed over the two years of study and evolved from a solo studio artist making sculptures to a socially engaged community-based artist collaborating, leading, and facilitating the material's capacity in the New Zealand context. The research project consists of a collection of early works that were representational and figurative in nature and focussed on presenting a personal narrative. Throughout these experiences, I was adapting to New Zealand weather, culture, soil, customs, and climate in relation to cow dung; I was finding my feet. A collection of three works followed that each demonstrate the evolution of my creative practice in this space of working with communities, ecological concepts, and cow dung.

**Key words:** community; creative practice; collaboration; sustainability; environment; socially engaged art practice; cow dung.

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## INTRODUCTION

For the last few years, I have become more conscious and concerned about the environment, the choices I make and their global impact.

Before coming to New Zealand, I was living and working in India as a ceramic artist with my own studio and a gas kiln. The consumption of gas for each firing became a concern for me and I started reflecting critically on my working mediums and processes. I searched for a material which was eco-friendly and biodegradable for my art practice.

My desire to work with natural materials, combined with an interest in ecology and sustainability, made me think of using cow dung as a medium for my creative practice. I have fond childhood memories making toys with this natural abundant material for the Holi Festival in the village.

I started to consider why this material is important in a place where the rituals and uses around cow manure are a part of both everyday Indian village life and sacred festivals. I was taken back to the time I spent in the village with my grandparents.

## COMMUNITY OF CONTENTMENT

‘Sustainability, ensuring the future of life on Earth, is an infinite game, the endless expression of generosity on behalf of all’ (Hawken, 2019).

My Dadi (Grandmother in Hindi language) would have been so proud ... I know she watches over us ... somewhere up there in the cosmos ... I listened, even when I didn't understand all the big ideas she shared about the beyond, about the magnificence of life and living ... but today I am thankful for the seeds of compassion and understanding she left me with ... which somewhere trickled to the others I share my life with ... she lives on ... in every conversation I have and every breath of gratitude that is born of the deep love of life ... she taught us ... miss you Dadi.

A childhood memory:

As the sun ascended in the early morning of the north-west Indian village, my siblings and I woke up to the tinkling bells of the cows in the shed. We ran from the warm earthy room to the open courtyard, both plastered with mud and cow dung.

As the day proceeded, our grandmother would sit on her jute woven charpoy (cot). As we played, she told us mythological stories and folktales. We made up games, toys, pretend plays and crafts with all that was around us in the house and the natural surroundings. We often ended up sleeping peacefully on the floor. It brought a sense of joy, of being present in life, where there is no worry of the future and no grief over the past.

In summer, we ate our meals amidst the cool breeze flowing through the neem and Peepal trees planted in this veranda. The smell of the fresh bajra roti (pearl millet bread) baked on the earthen stove used to make our stomachs grumble. Everyone would sit with their brass plates near the

stove to eat fresh hot roti, chutney and lassi. Sometimes, when there was a shortage of wood for cooking, Dadi would ask me to bring the cow dung cakes drying in the sun on the terrace to continue cooking for the family. Kaki (aunt) would collect the ash from the earthen stove to clean all the utensils. I loved polishing my favourite brass plate with a small peacock etched on it with the ash until it gleamed like a mirror. Sometimes the children competed for whose plate was most shiny! Whenever Dadi fetched cow dung to make patties for fuel, I followed her to the cow shed, latched on to her daman (traditional skirt) and etched my little, tiny fingers in the dark brown muddy cow dung. What a thrill it was to arrange flowers, moons, suns, and stars into a garland using a jute string.

As children, we marched bare feet on cold sand, adorning the garland, singing, and dancing. We threw the garland in the huge bonfire made of dried cow dung for 'Holi Dahan' (Indian festival). This is one of my most cherished memories associated with this material. The whole Nature-Man-Animal-Divine flowed into each other with natural acceptance; one led to the other and one contained the other.

My soul has longed for that beautiful time of contentment and beauty. After several years of living in the city, those little hands, now growing old, still carry the tactile memories of this material and its amazing properties. I want to play with it again with the same passion and exuberance. Through art, once again, cow dung is reclaiming its presence in my life. It is a conscious choice to use this medium along with other natural materials for all my projects to reveal the potential of cow dung as a valuable resource and tool well beyond its uses within Indian culture.

## THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD AND OLD WISDOM

People from the city generally consider working with cow dung to be dirty and disgusting, whereas in rural places, it is associated with everyday life. I lived most of my adult life within the multicultural metropolitan city of Delhi, India. Because of globalisation and industrialisation related to capitalist development, we were disconnected with the old indigenous wisdom. There was a lack of knowledge around cow dung and its useful properties as a sustainable material. Unlike village houses plastered with mud and cow dung for insulation, city dwellings were built as square boxes in a concrete jungle; living was difficult without fans and air conditioning. In the name of growth and development, one could see the rapid degradation of the environment, fossil fuel pollution and garbage heaps of plastic everywhere.

In my village, cow manure was associated with a sustainable living culture. In the cultural practices of my village, nothing was wasted; everything was recycled and reused.



Figure 1. *Prayer of Cow Dung: Govardhan Puja*  
*Women kneading sacred cow dung for making two-dimensional sacred Govardhan (worship of Mount Govardhan) sculptures, in the rural villages nearby Udaipur (Rajasthan), India.*

## INTERCONNECTEDNESS

I have realised that the common denominator amongst all my ongoing efforts, choice of subject and material, instincts, tendencies, and inclinations, to be a search for what unifies everything. Whether it is the feeling of oneness in the village with community, nature, and materials or the desire to help the future through community-based art, the underlying need is to experience the love of uniting with all. The feeling of universal oneness is a very distinct one, different from the love that one feels to one's family or one's object of desires. This has been my constant inspiration and driving force. This search has culminated in this research project and asks:

How can I, as an artist, create a space to sow seeds of creativity and sustainability while co-creating with nature and communities?

How does cow dung assist me to do this?

As I looked for stories of interconnection and wholeness, I started connecting more to the wisdom within Māori culture and the value of kaitiakitanga (guardianship, stewardship) which resonated with my Indian value system. 'The world is a vast family, and humans are children of the earth and sky, and cousins to all living things. Such unity means that nature is the ultimate teacher about life' (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2021).



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Figure 2. *Nut-Khut.*

Figure 3. *Sunehre Pal (Golden Moments).*

Figure 4. *Dadi aur Main.*

Figure 5. *Magical Bird.*



Figure 6. *Symphony of Life*.



Figure 7. *Gudgudata Alhadpan (A Silly Love Story)*.

## CONTEXT

My creative practice has radically changed since my BFA in India and coming to New Zealand. Early works explored my memories of the village life I experienced as a child, and my love and reverence for Mother Nature. They took the form of paintings and prints and eventually I started doing ceramic art where the work gained a new form, language, and expression. The quest to be kind to oneself and Mother Earth ended in finding cow dung as the perfect medium with a minimum carbon footprint.

Before immigrating to New Zealand, all I wanted to hear about was cow dung, eco villages and organic dairy farms within or near the Wellington area. As New Zealand has a big dairy industry, I thought it would be a perfect place to work with cow manure because of its abundance; I could use this beautiful material to make all sorts of arts. Because I did not know the place, the people or the culture, and there are so few organic farms in New Zealand, it took me three months to source grass fed cow's manure from a local organic farm to make my art.

I also came to know that in New Zealand cow dung is not respected or sacred as it is in India. It is considered a waste and a very unpleasant material compared to India where it is regarded as a precious gift from cows to the world. In my village culture, cows are sacred; we understand how to use all the cows' gifts including manure.

### COW DUNG: TREASURE OR MENACE

Having been brought up in a culture where the cows are worshipped and their products from milk to excreta are used for well-being, my first experiences in New Zealand were of sharp contrast. I found that India and New Zealand have very different definitions and attitudes about the purity or value of dirt, especially in the context of animals. To understand this cultural gap around dirt, shit, waste, hygiene, and cleanliness, I turned to three books significant to this project. Below are some excerpts from those books that have informed me.

In the modern west it is generally assumed that hygiene practices, and acceptable standards of cleanliness have been developed in a linear fashion in response to scientifically informed 'germ theory', which unquestionably explains what is hygienic or unhygienic, and which technologies and behaviours will banish the microscopic organisms that threaten to spread disease. However, when cleaning practices are examined closely we find that the daily processes intended to keep bodies, houses or cities free of dirt are not organized in direct relation to unquestionable scientific evidence. Scientific definitions of 'dirty' and 'clean' are produced within particular historical and cultural contexts, rather than standing objective truths (Campkin & Cox, 2008).

The strength of emotional reactions to perceived dirt and emotive prompts to clean are not new. Architectural theorist Adrian Forty has argued that modernist hygiene reformers in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain used a combination of scientific and emotive arguments to press for change.

He concludes that ‘on the whole the arguments based upon scientific logic were less effective than those which applied to emotion’ (Campkin & Cox, 2008). Guilt-tactics were used as a rationale for increased hygiene meant that dirt was simultaneously a moral and physical problem. ‘In contemporary society, at both an individual and collective level, we are driven to eradicate dirt by a complex and often contradictory web of scientific and cultural, rational, and emotional, physiological and psychological prompts’ (Forty, 1986). In fact, the emotional charge an artist gets from working with a material, even cow dung, creates an intimate relationship that promotes an open ended manner of working and permits experiencing with the material, acting into its inherent possibilities. It is:

‘... a dialogue without language, a dialogue between body and material. This experience of having a dialogue with materials seems central to the process of making and apparently reflects a highly valued aspect of the craft practices, largely neglected among researchers’ (Brinck et al., 2019).

In *History of Shit*, French psychoanalyst Dominique Laporte remarks:

Until the mid nineteenth century, in much of Europe, linen was cleansed by soaking in stale urine. The poor would use the urine to cleanse themselves too, apparently with excellent results. Other cleansing agents used in Britain included ‘lye’, made by steeping wood ash in water, to which could be added bran, stale urine or chicken or pigeon dung steeped in water. These materials produced the desired results-visible whiter clothes-using materials that were freely available. This illustrates that urine was seen as simultaneously contaminating and cleansing and reveals ‘human ambivalence to bodily wastes and discontinuity in our systems for dealing with them’ (2002).

Many theorists have considered dirt and cleanliness from historical, cultural and geographic perspectives, few so well known as social anthropologist Mary Douglas who published *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* in 1966. Dirt is:

‘matter out of place’ ... cleanliness and contamination, pollution and prohibition, are part of a classificatory system, used by all cultures, to police boundaries ... Dirty things ... are those that transgress established borders, confound order and disrupt dominant belief systems ... dirt, purity and ‘pollution behaviours’ related to these categories, are socially constructed, culturally and historically specific. (Douglas, 2013).

## **THE MATERIAL PROPERTIES OF COW DUNG**

As humans slowly deplete the earth’s resources, we require renewable materials which are easy to harvest, build and cultivate and are in abundance. And cow dung is one of the natural resources which is readily available in abundance. It’s amazing properties can serve everyone from designers, artists, architects, gardeners or farmers and many others.

Cow dung has innumerable medicinal, healing, and purifying properties that are still utilized in a wide range of life functions from fertilizers to treatment of serious illnesses (Sachithanandam, 2021).

**Fuel:** Cow dung contributed to the fuel needs of the rural people in villages in the form of dried cow dung cakes and as a gobar gas which is an alternative to the modern energy forms like LPG or electric stove. It provides efficient fuel with good calorific value. A gobar gas plant can give a clean fuel with very less smoke on burning (Minde, 2014).

**Binder:** Cow dung is an excellent binder with a lot of fibres present in it and creates smooth finishing when applied on the walls as a plaster and increases the insulation properties of the plaster (Patel, et al., 2019; Anaadi 2020).

**Fertilizer:** Residue left behind after composting is a good manure for farming (Swain, et al. 2012).

**Thermal insulator:** When used in cob and adobe earth-based construction techniques, cow dung could serve to make millions of homes warm and more energy-efficient (Mahamat, 2015).

**Anti-Pollutant:** Cow dung contains diverse groups of microorganisms which makes them suitable for microbial degradation of pollutants (Randhawa, 2011).

**Antidepressant:** The bacterium *Mycobacterium Vaccae* found in the cow dung contributes to antidepressant properties of cow dung. When these are inhaled it enhances the growth of the neurons in our body, which in turn stimulates the growth of serotonin and norepinephrine in the brain, basically the happy drug is released, which works wonders against anxiety (Gupta, et al., 2016).

## THE USE OF MANURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN

During this MFA, I have located many artists and designers using manure to make contemporary works and products.



Figure 8. Making clothes out of cow poo.

Jalila Essaidi, is a Dutch bio-artist who introduced extraordinary clothing made from cow dung to deal with the massive surplus of cow poop in the Netherlands, Essaidi and her team invented a method to recycle cow manure into bioplastic, creating a new material, which can be used to create sustainable fashion and help tackle modern society's over consumption and climate change (Brouwers, 2016).



Figure 9. Werner Härtl.

Werner Härtl is an illustrator, painter, and cowherder from Bavaria. Viewers whose amused fascination with his work stops at the stuff on the picture plane are missing the point of his "Kuhmistkunst," or cow-dung art; Härtl's artistic use of excrement reflects all he holds dear (Guigui-Stolberg, 2021).



Figure 10. *Untitled (Memory)* (2015), Mawande Ka Zenzile.

South African Artist Mawande Ka Zenzile uses cow dung in his art on canvas. Use of cow dung links him back to his childhood as it takes different forms on canvas as an evolution of cow dung (Mitchell, 2019).



Figure 11. *Museo della Merda* brand: vases, flowerpots, tiles, plates, bowls, a jug and a mug.

The Shit Museum, or Museo della Merda, is a research and data-collection institute set in a medieval castle in Northern Italy that houses information on excrement across culture, technology, science and history, to combine biomechanics with environmental art (Anderson, 2016).

For thousands of years, houses have been made of mud and cow dung, materials proven to be a stable foundation against natural disasters and offer thermal insulation (Curtiss, 2016). Now protected historical sites, these structurally sound conical mud and dung homes in the Harran Region of Turkey known as the Beehive Houses date back to biblical times.



Figure 12. Traditional Bhunga Houses and huts



Figure 13. Beehive Houses, Harran Region, Turkey.



Figure 14. Kassena Homes, Tiébélé, Burkina Faso, West Africa.

My research revealed that New Zealand's earth building efforts have been noble but perhaps slow to take hold, probably for reasons to do with earthquake strengthening, damp proofing and popular taste and aesthetics. Lydia Kiroff and Harry Roedel write: 'Whilst conventional building technologies have proved adequate for residential construction in New Zealand, the greater variety of sustainable construction systems on offer has not been adequately utilized as a viable alternative' (2010). As New Zealand is in an earthquake zone, with strong winds and high rainfall, earth buildings are not a favourable choices. However, there were more than 600 historic earth buildings in New Zealand before the 1980s revival of interest in earth building. Pompallier House (1841) at Russell, Bay of Islands, is a well-known example of rammed earth construction, which has stood the test of earthquake, storms, and time (WCC 2008). While I don't pretend to have delved into earth building construction to a great degree, my creative practice research and experience point to earth building, including the use of cow dung, having a promising future especially if supported by further architectural and engineering research and testing.

## COMMUNITY ART PROJECTS BRINGING CHANGE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

In recent years, many artists have redefined and reimagined the neglected areas of engagement with the environment and brought forth dynamic, useful, creative, and productive methods by working with people and allowing change to happen. Here are a few that have been pivotal towards developing my creative research practice this year:



Figure 15. Fresh water restoration at Kuku Beach, Aotearoa.

Dr Huhana Smith is a visual artist, curator and principal investigator for a research team who collectively engages in major collaborative, trans-disciplinary, kaupapa Māori and action-research projects for Māori lands and waterways. In recent years, her research team has investigated freshwater decline into the marine for Māori water/coastal lands and related biodiversity (Bryant et. al, 2017). Welcomed on to her marae Tūkorehe Marae in Kuku for a MFA wananga, I came to see how she amongst others had put into action many of the same values I admire and reach for. Her collective

projects by the Kei Uta 'Whakatairangitia rere ki uta, rere ki tai (Proclaim it to the land, proclaim it to the sea)' are an excellent learning example on how to approach climate change in collaboration through art and design and science with a mātauranga Māori perspective. Her projects demonstrate the potential for culturally specific methodologies and values to create a framework for collaboration: developing a set of culturally aligned research practices, bridging the gap between worldviews, and facilitating productive research with local Māori communities. Her research poses the following question: how might art and design productively bridge the gap between science and

*mātauranga Māori*, and catalyse a coastal farming community to adapt to climate change? Her research seeks to rebalance the environment damaged by dairy farming.

Indian scholar, physicist and activist Vandana Shiva talks about agriculture, biodiversity and bioethics in her book, *Earth Democracy*, with a holistic view that draws connections between the health of the plant and human health, which is based on the ecological science of interconnectedness (Shiva, 2015).

Sharon Kallis is a Vancouver artist who specializes in working with unwanted natural materials. Instead of problems, she sees useful solutions and opportunities with these materials. Involving the community in the making of the artwork, using traditional hand techniques with garden waste and invasive species is quite remarkable. She creates site-specific installations that become ecological interventions. Interacting with wastelands, natural environments, and communities, she calls out:

What each of us can do is think local: to look at the people, places and unusual resources that surround us. By recognising that human culture is a part of an ecosystem- not separate- and by creatively reimagining what symbiotic relationships of local production and consumption might look like, we could go a long way as individuals and communities in changing our relationships to earth on a local, personal level common threads: weaving community through collaborative eco-art (Kallis, 2014).



Figure 16. Sharon Kallis, *The Ivy Boat*, 2009. English ivy, assorted park maintenance branch waste. Collaborative project in Stanley Park, Vancouver; a total of 200 volunteers over four days participated in pulling ivy, building a structure, and weaving the ivy boat.

One of the questions that she is constantly posing to herself and others is:

[H]ow can we be as makers, as artists, how can we be producers without having to be consumers? That is the base question and root of everything that grows from that place and within that I look at what are the local resources we can use so that we can be away from the consumption model and reconnect to that of producers in the real and purest sense. The resources are the plants, the places we are working and the people in my sense (Kallis, 2014).

The kind of local arts engagement involving individuals and groups in collaborative events with national organisations to create meaningful public spaces where people can meet, celebrate and

connect with each other provide opportunities to critical reflect as an alternative to the dominant discourse on social developmental that often tends to exclude the less vocal, less confident, and certain members of society. This is especially relevant where historically these indigenous knowledges have been suppressed (Donkers, 2021).

Through her eco-social art practice methods, environmental artist Laura Donkers reveals the role and value of community embodied knowledge to develop climate literacy and promote wholistic interconnectedness of human and non-human communities. She understands the potential of art as an agent of social intervention, community building, and cultural change and advocates open-call processes including self-nomination of participants. through an open-call process where participants self-nominate. Establishing a space where by close listening and dialogue results in a space that the community can enter, influence and direct themselves; to start to have transformative climate change conversations (Donkers, 2019).

## FROM INDIVIDUAL TO COMMUNITY-BASED ART PRACTICE

The last two years have been extremely challenging and enriching for me. Being in a new country, in a new culture, exploring and getting familiar with the places and acclimating to the weather, and then COVID-19 was an extraordinary adventure.

In semester one, I worked with cow dung and other natural materials to create sculptures and objects alone in my studio. It was a different space altogether: me, the materials and the artwork and my imaginative world.

During the pandemic isolation periods, I would take long walks in the forest to gather natural materials such as twigs, pine needles, leaves, pinecones, and grass for my artwork. A gradual transition happened in my art practice, a shift from working indoors in a studio and alone to working outdoors in a natural environment using whatever was available in the form of natural materials. It was like returning to my childhood. I felt more a part of nature in New Zealand than in Delhi.

## EXPERIMENTAL WORKS



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Figure 17, 18. *Deer* and *Camel*, pine needle sculptures



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Figures 19-21. Totem-like sculptures representing the culture and natural world, a message of old time in a symbolic form.

### VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM (THE WORLD IS ONE FAMILY)

The first significant work was a small hut plastered with cow dung sited close to my house and the woods, which made it convenient for me to gather the branches and twigs for the frame. The work is a symbolic representation of Mother Earth, providing shelter to all the life forms as a member of the earth family. The process of making this hut included:



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Gathering and checking the elasticity of the branches for making the round frame of the hut.

The branches were pushed 5-6' deep in the ground to make a dome-like round structure for the hut. Intersecting each other, they were tied with Harakeke leaves.



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After the structure was ready, it was woven with the dried leaves of a cabbage tree to make a base and support the cow dung plaster. The hut was plastered by hand twice. The first coat was thick and the second was a thin layer. Working outside in the sun meant it dried within 10 days.



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Figure 22-28. *Vasudhaina Kutumbakam*

Decorated and embellished with different motifs and patterns, populated by flora and fauna. All the motifs find an expression to represent the essence of living in harmony with each other and celebrating life. This round structure withstood Wellington's extreme wet and windy weather for more than 14 months before the cow dung plaster gradually started to shed, which demonstrates the material's water resistant and binding properties.

### A SMALL PERMACULTURE SCULPTURAL GARDEN



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I proceeded to craft a small garden to grow vegetables and native plants adjacent to the hut. It included a sculptural windbreak fence made from harakeke, grass, twigs, and branches to shelter the plants from the strong winds and direct sunlight. It was created with the support of my neighbours, my children, their friends. I had hoped that it would start a conversation around environmental awareness and prompt a greater connection to the natural world within our community



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Figure 29-31. A small permaculture sculptural garden.

## IN THE MEMORY OF THE GONE

This site-specific work was installed between two pine trees in the golf course adjacent to my home in Island Bay. It memorialised birds' extinction because of several human leisure activities such as golf courses, which have significantly altered the earth by reducing bird habitats. It was inspired by sound artist Sally Ann McIntyre's ecologically-engaged sound work entitled *The Silences of Huia Birds* (Boyle, 2019). As my first site-specific work, I learned how vital it is to understand the history of the place and how the artwork responds to the land and its people. The work also showed me how other species such as birds were part of the making conversation.



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Figures 32-35. *In The Memory Of The Gone*

## MOTHER EARTH SCULPTURE

The next work was a sculpture that expressed my reverence for Mother Earth, who nourishes all life forms. And being her child, I feel responsible to take care of her and not harm her. Making sustainable choices for making my art is one of my loving gestures for her.



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Figures 36-39. *Mother Earth* sculpture.

She is crowned with New Zealand's native plants called Toe-toe (the blonde hair beauty of the shores) and the Kauri (known as the whale of the forest, holding apart the sky and the earth, illuminating the living world) (Vennell, 2019). Her hair is the oceans, rivers, and streams of freshwater. All life born out of her lotus navel is nourished by her umbilical cord, and are interconnected. She protects and embraces us all with the warmth of her embodiment. The sacs on her body are the life-giving embryo-shaped sacs where plants will be inserted. The materials are natural and biodegradable.

Native seed balls were made with mud mixed with cow dung for gifting it to the audience to bring the spirit of kaitiaki (guardianship of the land). The seed balls were placed in the jugs made of jute cloth and fallen leaves.

Being a spiritual and ritualistic work in a contemporary art school building was a big contradiction. It created and opened a new space for the audience to interact with it and each other. For some it was an uncomfortable space to discuss it as an art object. For some it was inspiring and took them to a space where they felt the connection with the earth and a responsibility towards it.

I learned that art, culture, and rituals have a special and powerful function to play as influencers and accelerators. The ability to reach people on the level of emotions and beliefs prompts new perspectives. In sustainable community art practices, it could instil ways of seeing problems, and develop creative solutions.

I relate this creative work with New Zealand installation artist Tiffany Singh's community art and cultural preservation practice. As stated by the 2020 Darwin Arts Festival, 'This (Tiffany Singh's work) presents contemporary art as a medium for achieving new educational and well-being models. Applying sustainable and ongoing initiatives where both artist, institution and community can look at the positive social impact they can achieve through the arts to find unique and personal solutions driven by cathartic and therapeutic processes.'

In the process of making all these works, I established relationships with people from different spheres of life: gardeners, farmers, sustainability trust, potters, artists, educationists, and academics. I also became aware that New Zealanders do not understand the value of cow dung the way I do and the way that the old wisdom I bring with me from India professes. It is misunderstood as a waste and something very unpleasant mostly since dairy is one of the main drivers of water pollution. For example, there are over 6.7 million dairy cows in New Zealand, each producing on average 27 kilograms of dung a day. That is over 66 million tonnes of dung a year (Forgie, 2021). 'Cow dung microflora includes about 60 bacterial species dominating by *Bacillus* sp., *Corynebacterium* sp., *Lactobacillus* sp., few fungal sp., (*Aspergillus* and *Trichoderma*), about 100 species of protozoa and 2 yeasts' (Bhatt & Maheshwari, 2019). Cow dung is a powerful inoculant that stimulates life; it is non-toxic, biodegradable, and supports other life forms to thrive if used with sensitivity (Laxminarayan et al., 2012).

It bothered me as to why New Zealand is not using this wonderful bioresource which is available in abundance. It could not only solve the cow dung waste problem but also can bring solutions to mitigate so many environmental problems. Cows are not native to New Zealand; they were introduced to this land by Europeans for dairy and beef farming. It has been a recent monoculture that has largely practised with chemical industrial farm methods and are one of the major causes of not only land and freshwater degradation but has eroded traditional knowledge of how to use resources wisely. It is a painful and agonising experience to see the land and rivers in so much distress. It became my goal to share the gift of this traditional ecological knowledge of using cow dung as a treasured tool to make my art practice more sustainable, and providing it, not as a product but as a wisdom that we all can share to contribute to bettering our lives

sustainably. Kofi Annan said ‘Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract – sustainable development – and turn it into a reality for all the world’s people’ (MacAskill, 2001).

I started finding possibilities in my practice where art serves itself with an aesthetic value as well as a social, cultural, or political purpose, where it can bring on change and a new holistic perspective to the world. It was not easy for me to introduce something like this in a short span of time in a new country while building trust with people to use it. Three different projects were set in motion to demonstrate, involve, and engage various communities with this material and how it can be used as an alternative sustainable and renewable bioresource. All the projects demanded a tremendous amount of work, time, planning, research, labour, energy, and social support. Self-reliance, doing with hands, being producers, creators and collaborators has been an important part of all the events. All the events were designed where attendees could be empowered by the whole process from the start. Physical touching and spending time with materials is very important to understand their properties. So, getting dirty is a vital part of learning.

## THE GOOD SHIT

In March 2021, I designed, pitched, and delivered a community workshop called *Poo Pottery* at the Sustainability Trust in Wellington, New Zealand. This workshop introduced cow dung as a sustainable material which can be used to make plant pots. These hand-made, inexpensive, and biodegradable pots have the benefit of nourishing the soil while replacing the toxic plastic pots which harm soil, entire communities, and ecosystems. The pots help to germinate seeds and fertilize the dirt at the same time. The workshop was an opportunity for people to learn, play and experience the magic of making something out of cow poo and to open new possibilities that this amazing medium offers.

I wanted to offer a space where participants could feel comfortable and enjoy the whole process of making. It was important for me as a facilitator to be well-equipped with all the materials needed for the event and be confident with my skills. Twenty-two people signed up for the workshop which was quite overwhelming and surprising for me and gave me hope and confidence that people are excited to know about this material and ready to experiment.

Preparations for this community event included securing the venue, sending out invites and promotion material, gathering cow dung and other natural materials, setting up tables and chairs for attendees to work comfortably, locate wooden bats for kneading and to work upon, source water for handwashing, and establish health and safety measures.

I shared all the properties of cow dung and its usage in different domains, and how it can become an eco-friendly alternative solution to many problems with attendees. I spoke about how it has been used in my village culture and displayed some of my works for them to have a better idea of its dried state in different stages of the process.



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**Step 1:** It was vital for the participants to learn the whole process from kneading, making to drying. Collect fresh organic cow dung from the pasture. Take out all the stones and unwanted long grass from the dung and spread it on cardboard or a big piece of stone outside in the sun. If the cow dung is very wet, then it needs to be dried out in the sun to bring it to a consistency to work with, where it is mouldable and remains cohesive. While drying, it is important to check that it doesn't dry out completely. Mixing and kneading for a uniform mixture is required while drying. When it's in a state where you can easily make a ball, it's perfect to start working with it. I was aware that for some people the smell of the cow dung could be unpleasant. To mitigate the smell, used coffee grounds were added with cow dung. It will also work as a fertiliser, which is rich in nitrogen and easily available in any coffee shop for free.



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**Step 2:** It's important to hand knead the mixture properly till it's cohesive and consistent.



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**Step 3:** After kneading, a plum size ball is made by tapping and rotating it in between the palms of the hand.



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**Step 4:** Place the ball in one hand firmly supporting it and place the thumb of the other hand in the centre of the ball and bring it down to the bottom. Gently rotate and pinch the ball starting from the bottom, and gradually coming up to form the sides of the pot with a uniform pressure. Keep repeating until the desired height and thickness are reached. Remember to support the pot with the other hand while rotating. The same technique can be used to make any small to medium sized pot.



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Figures 40-49. *Poo Pottery Workshop.*

**Step 5:** Using tools such as sticks, toothpicks or any other pointed tool, decorate the pots with different natural materials: leaves, bits of coloured wool, seeds, grass, moss, etc. While working on or decorating the pot, always remember to support it with the other hand. Attendees also explored new possibilities of making coasters and mugs.

**Step 6:** Take the pots home to dry slowly in a sunny place for ten to fifteen days. Turn and flip the pots regularly so all sides get aired and until the rim gets hard and dry.

The workshop provided a talking point for this material. Participants were surprised to learn about cow dung's properties. The workshop paved a way for critical inquiry with this material for everyone. Some interesting conversations occurred with questions: Are there any other animal's excrement that can be used? What is the best way to store the cow manure? Is the material good for making objects for the indoors or outdoors?

It was impressive to see participants working without wearing any gloves, which was unexpected, and pleasing for me. It gave them an experience of the tangibility of cow dung and allowed them to use this material more confidently. It may have also dispelled a conception of dirt and waste.

Attendees were so enthusiastic they used all the cow manure I had collected plus the extra I had put aside. It was a delightful moment to see kids enjoying their creativity with this material. It increased my confidence and joy to see people enjoying working with this medium. My daughter It was a fulfilling day for me, and I didn't realise how quickly the two hours passed. Everyone left with the exchange of warm hugs and big smiles, along with their beautiful creations and a learning experience that we all could share with family and friends.

Reflecting on this workshop, I realised that sometimes we hesitate to share things because we worry that people will not like the idea. I learned that it is extremely vital to take initiative and share with people with an honest and open heart if we really want things to happen. I also came to understand that people are becoming more conscious and interested in learning new things which are good for the environment; they are ready to get dirty, changing the concept of dirt in western culture. Facilitating workshops proved to be an excellent option to share practically and demonstrate cow manure as a building material with the wider community. I learned to run the workshop effectively and to create a friendly environment for the participants where they could freely ask questions and have fun making.

There were two participants who struggled with the material and needed more attention than others. I realised it is hugely imperative to be very patient, gentle, and assist consciously, so that participants don't get frustrated and yet have space to solve problems themselves and feel empowered. At the end, participants were able to make four pots and were quite happy with their works. This experience confirmed for me who I am and how my sharing can bring possibilities for other people to explore this medium and empower them. This is my path as a socially engaged artist.

A day before the workshop I received a call from TVNZ requesting a brief interview about making pottery with cow dung. Apparently, they saw the workshop posted on the Sustainability Trust's Facebook page. Though I was nervous, this live telecast in front of cameras for the first time showed me that there was an audience for my work and its relation to sustainability. I was on my way to showing New Zealand the potential of this indigenous material. During the interview, the show host Abby willingly worked the material with no gloves on her hands. This interview produced several inquiries from many parts of New Zealand such as Wellington, Waikato, Christ Church, North Palmerston and one from a UNSW student in Australia (Sustainability Trust, 2021).

## **PIT FIRING WITH COW DUNG**

The second project of this year is a collaborative community event of pit firing with cow dung. In India, cow manure in the form of dried cow dung cakes has been used as a fuel for cooking food for centuries in the villages. It has also been used recently as biogas. Introducing cow manure as an alternative to fossil fuel for cooking food in New Zealand was challenging. I had to be innovative. Why not use cow dung instead of wood, as an alternative fuel for pit firing and involve the Wellington Potters' Association? While building a pit to fire ceramics was important, the project was more about building a community of relationships with the farmers, farm, cows, and people.

The whole learning process happened in three phases: collecting cow dung and making cow patties, loading the pit, starting the fire, tending the fire, and opening and unloading the pit.

### **Collecting Cow Manure From The Farm**

After inspecting three different farms to check the quality and their location, I selected one farm in Otaki to collect the cow dung because it was closest to the venue where we were supposed to make the cow patties. We gathered at the farm and the instructions of the process of collection were given to all: The best way to pick up cow dung is with your hands. It's always faster and easier to work in pairs to collect and carry the heavy tubs. We gathered enough cow dung to make more than 150 patties. We transferred the collected cow manure to the car trunk and shifted it to Julieanna's house in Otaki Beach



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Figure 50-53. Margaret, Ruth and Jess collecting cow dung from the farm.

### Making Cow Dung Patties

The cow dung and straw were unloaded on tables in Julieanna’s garden area. Cardboard was used to cover the tables to assist in kneading the manure. I demonstrated making the cow patties using the ratio of 10 parts cow dung to 1 part straw. Large balls flattened into discs were transferred to a plastic sheet in front of a large sunny window in the studio. After two weeks, the cakes were propped on their edge, face to face, which allowed the underside to dry for a one month.



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Figure 54-62. Cow dung patties making process. Process.

## Loading and Firing



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A pit fire occurred on October 3rd at 72 Happy Valley Road, Owhiro Bay Community Gardens. For pit firing, either a deep hole is dug in the ground or it can be carried out in a steel drum with a small opening on the side that allows oxygen to flow through at the bottom.



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The pottery pieces were burnished and bisque-fired before to give a shiny finish and also reduce the risk of pots breaking, as it is a fast and uneven firing technique. To start, a layer of dried organic materials-leaves and dried wooden chips-were laid down with some newspaper at the bottom, followed by half a metre layer of dried cow



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Then the pots were placed carefully in-between cow dung patties. The drum was loaded up with dried cow dung cakes and some paper and straw on top to light the fire.

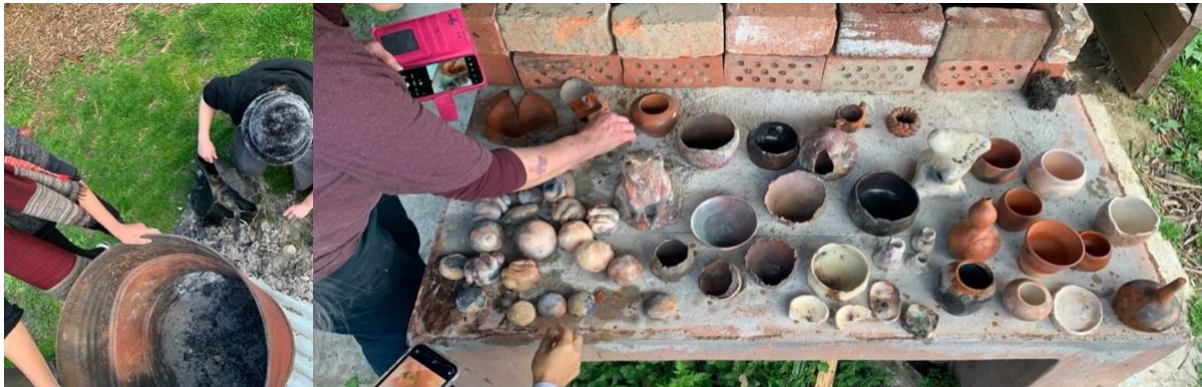


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Once it started burning, it was covered with the corrugated metal sheet and left to burn for 3 hrs. until the temperature reached over 1000 degrees Celsius. More dried manure was added to the fire as it was burning. A bucket of water was kept near the fire for safety reasons. When the fire started reducing, it was left closed for two days.

## Opening and Unloading

When pit was uncovered, all the pieces were found under the burnt cow dung ash. As we lifted the works out, the beautiful firing effects on the pots were revealed with amazing colours and patterns. All the works were washed.

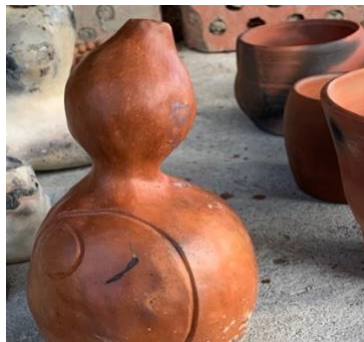


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Figure 63-76. The pit-fire experience and results.

## **BLANKET OF WARMTH** *Woven with threads of compassion, hope and love*

‘A gift is pure when it is given from the heart to the right person at the right time and at the right place, and when we expect nothing in return’ (The Gita, n.d.).

The third and last project of this series project is also located at Owhiro Bay Community Gardens, also known as the *Makai Kanga Community Centre*. It demonstrates the thermal insulation property and aesthetic potential of a decorative surface of cow dung. It included plastering the walls and floor of an uninsulated shed\room and making a relief mural with a mixture of mud, cow dung and straw, an old method of plastering homes in rural India. It is reminiscent of my village home and the fragrance and warmth of my childhood days spent with my grandparents in the village in those humble dwellings smeared with cow dung and mud. It is also special for the most magical, unimagined, and extraordinary learning experiences I had with the people who co-created with me, with this place, it’s community and its natural surroundings.

Makai Kainga Community Centre  
Nau te rourou,  
Naku Te Rourou,  
Ka ora Te Iwi.

Your basket of Knowledge,  
My basket of Knowledge,  
Will service the people (Mark et al., 2015 )

*Makai Kanga* is a charitable trust that offers various services for people at the centre including the community gardens and short term and long-term accommodation for the homeless, the alcoholic, the elderly, the mentally ill and rehabilitated offenders (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2016).

The community is tucked under a steep bush-clad hill. A river winds between the community garden and a cluster of tiny houses that form the men’s refuge. The decorated tiny houses and the allotments have a freedom about them. Each is an individual simple white box shed rooms painted in purple and green. The allotments range from weedy abundance to tidy rows.

On first entering, this place seems like a typical residential house lot, but soon one is drawn to the Owhiro Stream, mesmerized by many ducks and eels, and sections of beautiful vegetable gardens. Ninety individual families from different nationalities and ethnicities grow vegetables here, a perfect example of unity in diversity and a vision of paradise.

The energy is calm and positive. There is a wholeness, a sense of peaceful coexistence in this natural ecology. There is freedom and respect for everyone and everything.



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Figure 77-82. Owhiro Bay Community Gardens with its natural surrounding.

### Materials and Process



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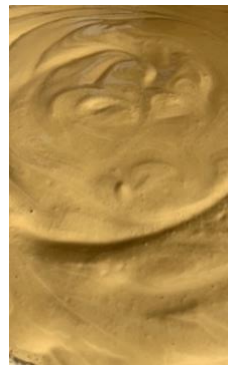
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Figure 83-87. Materials used for plastering: Jute cloth, harakeke fibre, cow dung, chicken mesh and mud.

Cow dung was collected from one of the farms in Otaki in garbage polybags and stored in Styrofoam boxes gifted by one of the volunteers.

Cow dung can be easily stored for a longer period without perishing, drying, and remaining in good condition. It does form a thin mucus layer on the top if it is stored for a longer time, but it remains fresh underneath. I have stored cow dung for as long as a full year.



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The mud was collected from two sites: construction sites at Island Bay, near the Church and from the pond at Owhiro Bay Community Garden. Harakeke fibre was also collected from the pond. Lots of space was needed to store all the materials and equipment needed to prepare the plaster.



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The mud collected from the construction site had lots of stone and other impurities and some of the clay was hard and chunky, which we had to crush and then wet.

In the process, we learned that instead of crushing the chunks, it was better to directly soak it in water for a week after which it got soft and easy to break by hand. After removing the stones, grass, roots and pebbles, all the clay was put through a soil sieve and stored in tubs and buckets.



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The plaster consists of 5 parts clay, 2 parts harakeke fibre, 2 parts cow dung and enough water to make it thick and sticky. The fibre increases the strength and cow dung works as a stabilizer, brings water-resistance and thermal insulation to the room.



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A large plastic tarp was used to mix the plaster and protect the lawn below. The plaster was mixed thoroughly. It was a fun activity for everyone to walk barefoot, jump, and dance on the plaster. The plaster was flipped over which require a great deal of muscle. The plaster was kept covered for four days to mitigate the odour of cow dung; it also makes the plaster smooth by enhancing its plasticity.



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The existing walls of the room are made of timber and already painted with acrylic paint, which made it difficult to adhere plaster. Removing the paint was a tedious and time-consuming job. The bonding of mud plaster to walls is very important. An easy solution of stapling chicken mesh was identified, which can hold the plaster very well and avoid cracks as well. When cow dung is mixed with the mud and straw, it makes a stronger and water resistant earthen plaster for walls and floors.

**First layer of plaster:** A thin coat of plaster was applied on the wall. The honeycomb structure of mesh formed a strong base for plaster to adhere and hold it effectively to the walls, preventing it from cracking. The plaster was thick enough to hold in hand without it running between the fingers.



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**Second layer of plaster:** A one inch thick wooden frame\skirting was installed at top and base, windows and door to cleanly end the plaster.



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The second coat was a half an inch thick and was carried out evenly with the help of wooden panels positioned in between the top and base frames which acted as thickness gauge. The surface was wetted thoroughly before applying the second layer between the frames. Later the centre frames were removed and the space was filled with the plaster.

**Third layer of plaster:** After three weeks, the plaster was dry enough to apply a natural jute fabric (hessian) followed by the third coat of plaster. The coat of plaster seeped in through the holes of the jute cloth and adhered quite strongly with the existed plaster and the surface was ready to make the relief mural.



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The room belongs to Oni, one of the Owhiro Bay Community members. It was important for me to know his choices and to make something which resonates with him. Oni chose a drawing of a stag standing in Urewera National Park of North Island from the book *Rei Hamon: Artist of The New Zealand Bush* (Hamon, 1976).

A nail was used to sketch the rough outline of the mural into the moist surface. The same plaster mix was used for modelling. A small portion of the mixture was applied on the wall, shaped into relief stems, leaves and other elements of the art work. The whole process of modelling took three days. When the surface was leather hard, it was rubbed smooth by a wet sponge. When it was completely dried, it was painted with natural clay paints.



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Figure 88-109. The process of making the mud plaster and applying it to the inside of the room

Figure 110-112. Attaching the jute cloth and smearing on the final coat of plaster.

Figure 113-115 Lance enjoying sculpting the Rimu tree branches with its weeping leaves and Manju enjoying making the beauty of the Stag.



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Figure 116-117. Visitors to the newly refurbished room

Owhiro Bay is a natural ecology of people, animals, materials, positive energies, land, and the perfect model of my entire project. I find myself fortunate to find this place to work with real spaces and real people. This place signifies universal oneness for me; being engaged with the natural materials and the community. It was an amalgamation of different cultures, people, societies coming together, learning from each other. I realised the importance of their presence, knowledge, and the kind of strength it brought within the project was phenomenal—all the energies working together for a greater purpose and evolving for a better change.

I spent many memorable moments with the *Owhiro Bay Community* and volunteers downing cups of tea, eating food together, discussing different kinds of native plants, art, Indian and New Zealand craft, tradition, culture, learning Te Reo Māori and waiata, celebrating with the community gardeners, singing, playing guitar, sharing personal stories—lots of fun and laughter.

**How did this project create a platform for people to come together and collaborate to create art/work sustainably and feel the spirit of connectivity and the power of togetherness?**

As I worked, people started to visit to see what I was doing. As I collected the mud from the pond, they started acknowledging the importance of the pond and its resources and gradually they started working with me. People from my earlier workshop joined in with their friends and family. The pit fire happened in the gardens and people from all three projects helped each other to set up, sharing stories, laughing and singing. It resulted in a celebrative event and a magical experience.

With these projects, I realised that community based art practice creates an environment for observation, communication, bonding and recognising locally available resources. This approach of working practically on the ground also makes people gain faith in the potential of change. When anyone observes hands-on work and live creation, they are more likely to join and trust the initiative. Unlike the virtual world of influencers today, where what is promised can be distant from what is the truth, collaborative on ground practice gains its acceptance and power from reality. It is initially harder and slower but its influence will be certainly longer.

Art-making transforms the suppressed creative energy that was active when we were children. This suppressed energy makes people feel less lively, old and frustrated. In previous times, making crafts, adorning oneself elaborately, dancing and singing together, telling folktales to each other came out of the natural movement of life. People came together to do these rather than practice it in separation. Today we do not have such outlets for creativity that celebrates life and interconnectedness. Community art practice gives another chance for people to open up their creative self. Creativity also teaches people to become happy in the moment. And learning together, in a natural space, creates a sense of wholeness, rather than feeling lonely and separate. I feel that community art practice is really a social service for all to heal, to become happy.

Human centered development is a means for enlarging people's capabilities in terms of skills, productivity and inventiveness. This necessarily implies an empowerment that allows them to participate actively in their own development. Development in these terms is something that is done by people rather than for or to them. And it is this essential of people's participation which defines the right to development in both its economic and political aspects (Reoch, 1994)

Sharing has always been part of my culture; it makes us good people. It brings humility and simple acknowledgement of each other's presence, as it is equally important for the giver and the receiver; there is reciprocity. There is an exchange of not only what you have as a resource or material but of mutual respect, value and the warmth of the relationships built in that exchange. This project is a beautiful example of how when people come together and work; work becomes joy and not a burden. It also helps each other economically as a kind of self-sustained economic system.

**वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam)**, means 'The world is a big family' and represents philosophical and spiritual Indian knowledge systems based on holistic development, expresses respect for all forms of life (Vasudaikakutumbam, 2015). It is a way to embrace and accept all beings, people of all faiths and races. It shares the similar philosophy of mātauranga Māori which reinforces the holistic connection that Māori have to the land and sea. It embodies their inherent connections to the ecosystem, spiritual beings, and other living species they share the land and sea with (Paul-Burke & Rameka, 2021).

Research shows that including values and practices pertaining to an indigenous worldview, such as mātauranga Māori, can encourage meaningful community engagement and build enduring connections between people and the environment (Kia Eke Panuke, 2016).

## WHAT I LEARNED IN THIS MFA:

*Overcoming hesitation* is the key to becoming socially engaged. In any place, one needs to overcome the hidden fears and approach others with vulnerability and an open heart. Initially it is not so easy.

*Learning documentation* of the process. Since I am more of an informal and hands on person, to engage in formal structured documentation meant learning to understand the role of writing, data collecting, and organisation.

*Precious Feedback* from my supervisors has steered me in the right direction when I was fixed in my ways of thought and when I tended to go astray.

*Learning research:* I gained knowledge of the methodology of creative practice research.

*World View:* Learning of the parallel world view related to socially engaged sustainable art practice was an eye opener for me.

*Learning how socially engaged art practice works:* meeting people, networks, building relationships, introducing new skills and ways of making that enable all to be co-authors. This includes putting ego aside and addressing everyone and everything in non-judgemental ways.

*Building relationships* is based on the principles of sharing, honesty, efforts, giving and receiving, being unconditional, respect, listening, embracing, time and trust, honesty, well-wishing, and interest.

*Cultural learning* about the western world of New Zealand and Māori expanded my perception of this place.

*Material learning:* The materials taught me about them more than the other way around.

*Place is vital:* Developing a connection with the land taught me about the value of the land as a resource, especially regarding Māori world view.

*Responsibility towards the earth:* My grandmother used to say: ‘The first thing you do in the morning is touch the ground and take its blessing. Everything has been born out of her womb. If you care for the land. The land will care for you.’

*Working materials by hand establishes a haptic and an energetic connection.* Māori weaver Kohai Grace says ‘It's the material which is doing something with your hand. The materials are everything; you are going to prepare your materials in the best possible way you can, and in respect of what you have taken, and you are going to make something beautiful. so, it's all about your intent and that's tikanga’ (Grace, 2019).

All the experiential dimensions that happened during this project were real learning for me to understand my own truth, without any presumptions, I could see transformation in myself and people around me. I now believe more strongly that when you bring something to the world being part of it, not separate, and with honesty, patience, faith and love, everything falls in place at the right time. Everyone automatically becomes part of that thing, with no differences, only inclusiveness, only joy of togetherness and love; strength is felt in that integration. I think that is the real beauty of life—when everyone forgets their differences and enjoys working together for

something bigger than us. Cow dung helped me do just that.

It is important for me as a socially engaged artist to understand how my art can intervene, bring awareness and can be a catalyst for change and sustainability. This question brings forth a lot of critical reflections on what and how I am working, where I am lacking and what are the improvised alternative creative possibilities in this direction. 'Community engaged art is to impart to conduct critical inquiry - practice that provides or combines efficacy for change' (Okano, 2015).

## MY FUTURE ART PRACTICE

I see great possibilities with cow dung as a medium. Integration with the architects and ecologists for further research and experiments with this material can open vistas of new knowledge that can uncover great possibilities. Cow dung could be a useful bioresource and can offer a great deal for economic and sustainable innovation and development of viable, environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional materials.

Manure has potential as a fuel because it contains a lot of carbon and other elements that can be used to generate different types of biofuels. Anaerobic digestion is a technology that uses microbes to process manure into biogas. Biogas can be used to generate heat or electricity for use on the farm or sale to the local power grid. Thermal processes can produce liquid bio-oil fuels, including biodiesel, and useful by-products like biochar. Bio-oils can be used for heating or generating electricity. Biodiesel can be used just like petroleum diesel. Gasification can also be used to convert manure to syngas, a synthetic gas fuel that can power engines, turbines, and fuel cells. Using manure to generate biofuels reduces our reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels. In addition, farmers can save money when biofuels are used on the farm (Global Ag Media, 2015).

Cow dung makes a good building material. One of the major effects of cow-dung additions is the significant improvement in the water resistance of adobe that permits us to conclude that the manufactured adobes are suitable as building materials in wet climates (Millogo, et al., 2016).

This research project has connected me with many people in New Zealand and beyond. Every week, a new opportunity arises where I have the chance to speak to or work with others around the sustainable merits of cow dung, and more so, the virtues of collaboration and socially engaged art. I plan to keep working with various communities to build a platform for people to come together and collaborate to create art/works sustainably and feel the spirit of connectivity, the power of togetherness and creating a happier community.

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