

# DEFINING A PRACTICE: WITH REFLECTION ON THE SLYVA CALEDONIA EXHIBITION

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When asked what is it we do, we often respond by saying we are artists; the work is about the evolution of our own subjectivity through an immersive and sustained creative inquiry. Pursuing ideas and experiences we reshape our own perception, which can open up opportunities to experience the world anew, this can result in a reconsideration of who we are and what we value. Sometimes our work results in material, performative and intellectual outputs affecting others in similar ways.

After more than twenty years of working across art, science and philosophy to develop a creative inquiry around questions of nature and culture while working through ideas about aesthetics, ecology and public space it is time for a confession. It has become increasingly clear to us standing before our friends and colleagues in the artworld and the real-world that what we do is suspect. Through the years we have heard from artists, curators and friends that presume involvement in the environmental arts means being ‘off in the weeds’ making work beyond the boundaries of what art is, or what it has been in the past. They are not malicious, but rather often thoughtful: they claim the work needs to refer to its history but the artist’s intention is not important; the viewer completes the work; and artists and artwork must be autonomous from the concerns of every day life. Recently Collins was offered the following idea to consider in a conversation about environmental artwork. Fine Art comes from Aristotle’s notion of ‘four causes’. The final cause relates to the purpose of the object’s existence. Should the final cause be the existence of artwork itself, and without other purpose, then it is properly understood as fine art.

Did Aristotle struggle with the meaning of fine art; did he conclude it was without purpose? Having written previously about the environmental arts, historic precedents and contemporary directions,<sup>[1]</sup> here we follow that work with assessment of what philosophers have thought art might be. We start by providing an overview of the edited texts and compendiums describing extant approaches to the question. With a set of definitions in hand, we reflect on our recent work in the exhibition *Sylva Caledonia* developed with colleagues Gerry Loose, Morven Gregor and Chris Fremantle for the galleries at Summerhall in Edinburgh. Fremantle described the exhibition as an idea that emerged from a day-long discussion with David Edwards, Collins, and Goto talking with Loose and Gregor about the role of art, poetry and social science in the perception of the ancient woodlands of Scotland. This specific contribution arose from questions raised during that exhibition. We hope it has some relevance for colleagues in the arts and humanities that take the environment as their subject.

Describing this writing effort to a friend recently, she asked, why we bothered to think about this conundrum? We said we were trying to gain some insight on why the informed, the semi-informed and the art-illiterate would all feel at ease denying baseline ‘art’ status to artists work. But more importantly we struggle with the cause and effect of this ever-present gatekeeping on the development of the field of work.

#### BACKGROUND

According to Paul Kristeller, the Greek and Latin terms Aristotle used applied to a range of human activity from craft to science. The visual arts (where they were referenced) were placed amongst manual crafts as something learned through practice but not taught as a set of ideas. Kristeller is recognised for rigorous scholarship that reveals that the concept of fine art didn’t emerge until the 18th Century. Kristeller identifies the pivot point in the work of the Parisian, Charles Batteux: ‘*The decisive step towards a philosophical description of a system of fine arts was taken by the Abbé Batteux in his famous and influential treatise from 1746, Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe.*’<sup>[2]</sup> Batteux described fine art as those practices with ‘pleasure for their end’ such as: music, poetry, painting, sculpture and the dance. He argues the principle (the definition) common to the fine arts was the imitation of beautiful nature, a perfect and harmonious whole.<sup>[3]</sup>

Other important figures include Immanuel Kant and G.W.H. Hegel. Kant’s definition of art was embedded in a systematic philosophy where he worked out the

relationships between knowledge, moral good and ideas of freedom. He claimed moral freedom was revealed through aesthetic experience.<sup>[4]</sup> *The Critique of Judgment* (1790)<sup>[5]</sup> became one of the most significant texts on aesthetics. Kant understood fine art as the work of an (artistic) genius with ‘*a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given.*’<sup>[6]</sup> Kant’s theories inform our general understanding of art as a subjective and autonomous endeavor. Aesthetic engagement being something beyond utility, where we engage the free play of imagination and understanding while bracketing practical concerns through intentional disinterest. Hegel is notable for the idea that art is one of the ways we understand who we are in the world; this is an important counterpoint to Kant. He argues (in addition to formal features) the content and meaning of art are important to the development of a linguistic and cultural network. He also suggests the modern artist suffers from a level of detachment from ‘any particular cause or creed.’<sup>[7]</sup> These ideas also inform contemporary thinking. We don’t consider Batteux to be much help to us here. Kant’s idea that art is subjective, a free play of the imagination without rules remains important. Hegel’s interest in the contribution art makes to socialisation and the problem of modern detachment is notable as we turn to the present.

#### CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS

Defining art is a slippery affair some argue it is an assembly of things with some common relational or functional interrelationship, but no boundaries or constraints on form. Some bracket the idea by what is known in history. What will become clearer is that the idea is an open concept that is not easily pinned down. This is art and that is not art suggests a closed concept. Informed by the dominant analytical traditions, most philosophers employ precision and thoroughness seeking a closed concept (on topics narrowly defined.) We want the reader to consider that this emphasis may produce the general conditions of the conundrum, the confusion and conjecture about what art is.

Historically the definition of art has focused on imitation and representation, the transmission of feelings, intuitive expression and the analysis of beauty and significant form. Philosophers today ask if these ideas are ‘true’ for all contemporary artwork and are they ‘exclusive’ to artwork? More recent ideas embrace the relational characteristics of arts practice as a means to arrive at a definition. Berys Gaut identifies a list of relevant criteria that can qualify things as art. Other approaches focus on function such as aesthetic pleasure (following Monroe C. Beardsley) or a procedural

institutional approach (following George Dickie) describing Artworld as the social context where work is developed, presented and received. Finally, building on ideas by Arthur Danto, Noël Carroll and others we outline a historical framework to establish genealogical relationships between the past and the present. In this essay we present some of these definitions and supporting ideas.

#### A RELATIONAL DEFINITION

Stephen Davies (2001)<sup>[8]</sup> and Thomas Adajian (2012)<sup>[9]</sup> provide an overview of the history and recent developments as philosophers attempt to define what art is. Defining something that is material consistent, static rather than dynamic with definitive boundaries is relatively easy; art is none of the above. Davies suggests the defining properties are ideas in relation to one another. Berys Gaut offers a list, based on ‘ordinary judgments’. Something might be art, if it is:

*‘(1) possessing positive aesthetic properties; (2) being expressive of emotion; (3) being intellectually challenging; (4) being formally complex and coherent; (5) having the capacity to convey complex meanings; (6) exhibiting an individual point of view; (7) being original; (8) being an artifact or performance which is the product of a high degree of skill; (9) belonging to an established artistic form; (10) being the product of an intention to make a work of art.’<sup>[10]</sup>*

Gaut is not saying all artwork needs all of these parts. He is saying it is art if all ten points apply, but if a work exhibits less than all of these ideas it is still art. Furthermore he says none of these ideas (on-their-own) are sufficient (necessary) for something to be art. Beyond that he suggests the list may not be definitive. Gaut bypasses the (analytical philosophers’) effort to refine and attenuate what art is to focus on a process sensitive to the diversity of artforms. Nothing more is offered than a list of ideas related to art and as such is considered a disjunctive a list of alternative choices rather than a closed concept definition. It is able to confirm the normative and the difficult examples emerging over the years like Duchamp’s Fountain (urinal) and John Cage’s 4’ 33” of silence. Philosophical critique demands principles for extending the list. The ninth principle begs the question of what an art form might be.<sup>[11]</sup> We suggest that Gaut’s approach is appropriately open, the case for art (or not) can be made by artist, audience, critic or historian. The discursive value of art has room to roam in this definition; art criticism also finds a toehold in the analysis. The other

relational approaches to a definition of art are either functionalist focused on aesthetics or procedural approaches (with ever stronger allegiances to analytic philosophy) that are descriptive and non-evaluative.

#### A FUNCTIONALIST DEFINITION

Davies identifies Monroe C. Beardsley the author of *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*<sup>[12]</sup> as the primary voice in the functionalist approach to a relational definition. It is important to note Beardsley was not convinced defining art was important, and seldom used the term in his first book. Later he would define art as:

*‘...either an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class or type of arrangements that is typically intended to have this capacity.’*<sup>[13]</sup>

This is an intentionally weak statement where the artwork reflects an unstated (but accepted) aesthetic potential or incidental reference to a historic typology. Having read his ‘Aesthetics’, we assume both the Duchamp and Cage would lie outside Beardsley’s ideas of ‘marked aesthetic character’ as it did not fit the ‘class or type’. If we try to apply the incidental references of class or type to these works, the Duchamp undermines the extant typologies, the Cage piece questions music itself.

#### AN INSTITUTIONAL DEFINITION

George Dickie is recognised for his procedural or ‘institutional’ definition of art based upon his earliest contribution, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (1974),<sup>[14]</sup> with revisions made in the *Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (1984).<sup>[15]</sup> Arthur Danto is recognised within the institutional discourse for an original journal contribution *The Artworld* (1964)<sup>[16]</sup> and remains a point of reference in the debates today. Stephen Davies outlines the development of Dickie’s thinking about art as an institution (rather than art as a set of things) below:

*‘A work of art is: One an artefact, two a set of aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of the Artworld.’*

Revision: *'First, an artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of art work; second, a work of art is an artefact of a kind created to be presented to an Artworld public; third, a public is a set of persons the member of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them; fourth, the Artworld is the totality of all Artworld systems; and finally, an Artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an Artworld public. The Artworld is the historical and social setting constituted by the changing practices and conventions of art, the heritage of works, the intentions of artists, the writings of critics and so forth.'*<sup>[17]</sup>

There is a lot we can agree with in the revised definition. We would characterise it as a procedural model of an artworld that is more inclusive than exclusive; artists, critics and an informed public all have a voice in this model; yet the model suggests an artworld without differentiation across nations and cultures. The focus on artefact / object constrains this definition to work that contributes to material culture, which is what museums and institutions attend to best. Duchamp would be considered in this context, the documentation of Cage's work might qualify as well.

#### HISTORICAL DEFINITIONS

The historical approach is more complicated with many philosophers contributing. We begin with Levinson (1990), then Carrol (1988) (who claims he was not defining art) then close with Stock (2003). Jerrold Levinson claims, *'an artwork is a thing that has been seriously intended for regard in any way pre-existing or prior artworks were correctly regarded.'*<sup>[18]</sup> Levinson argues art is art if it was intended to be appreciated the way works were in the past. However, he suggests artists may have no idea about the historic artworks they draw upon; so art doesn't become art until a historian says so. Noël Carroll demands accuracy, grounded explanations and transparency on validation of the work through critical narrative:

*'This narrative must be accurate, must explain later events as generated out of earlier ones, and must track the adoption of a series of actions and alternatives as appropriate means to an end on the part of a person who arrived at an intelligible assessment of the art historical context in such a way that he or she resolved to change it in accordance with recognisable and live purposes of the practice.'*<sup>[19]</sup>

Despite his reservations about definitions, Carroll sets out a rigorous structure for the development of a critical historical narrative. Kathleen Stock offers a series of checkpoints following on from Carroll: '1) *there are internal historical relations between it and already established artworks*; 2) *these relations are correctly identified in a narrative*; and 3) *that narrative is accepted by the relevant experts*.'<sup>[20]</sup> Stock asserts that some things have certain properties significant to the consideration of what art is. Stock describes an empirical lineage, a pedigree for artwork to be judged valid by history experts; a museological methodology.

Philosophers raise a number of issues with the historical approach. They look for clarity on correct identification and question the presumption that all historical examples are of equal value.<sup>[21]</sup> Davies questions the artworld as a singular entity with an uncanny ability to find consensus on contemporaneous work.<sup>[22]</sup> It is safe to say that there is no singular artworld but rather innumerable artworlds and cultures, museums, galleries and journals that more often than not have rudimentary differences about art's purpose and recent history. Whether work is contemporary or centuries old, there are changing ideas about value and import as museums come to grips with world culture and post-colonial ethics and practices.

#### SYNTHESIS

Returning to the questions motivating this essay, the first is do any of these definitions serve the interests of environmental artists? The follow on question is about the effect of gatekeeping and the long-term interests of the field. It is important to say a quick review of half the books piled on our studio table indicate philosophers recognise the problem of defining art in terms that hold up to their own standards: Beardsley thinks it unnecessary to mark the '*boundaries of the subject*';<sup>[23]</sup> Margolis comments it is '*notoriously difficult*';<sup>[24]</sup> Speaking on aesthetics, Cooper says '*It can only be as clear and sharp as the notions of art and aesthetic experience themselves are – that is not very*';<sup>[25]</sup> Feagin and Maynard ask why does it matter, then points to values in the individual arts as a better place to focus attention;<sup>[26]</sup> Gaut and Lopes (likewise) focus our attention on the arts plural rather than a singular idea about art.<sup>[27]</sup>

Getting back to our interest in environmental change, we replace Duchamp's 'urinal/fountain' with Mel Chin's *Revival Field* (1991–93)<sup>[28]</sup> a bio-remediation project that 'sculpted the ecology' of the Pig's Eye Landfill, near St. Paul, Minnesota. Chin working with scientist Rufus Chaney<sup>[29]</sup> used extant knowledge of plant hyper-accumulators to develop the challenging ecological-reclamation-based artwork.



The project engaged the generative, recuperative and regenerative capacities of vegetation and microbial activity to work on toxicants below ground ‘revealing’ a revitalised landscape above. *Revival Field* is understood through the record of the work itself (and various commissioned replicates). Tom Finkelpearls’ interviews reveal the artists’ and scientists’ intentions as well as Chin’s critical dialogue about the evolution of sculpture with National Endowment for the Arts Chairman John Frohnmayer. The Chairman (a lawyer) denied funding for the work (after two peer review panels had approved it) claiming... the work was not art. Frohnmayer would eventually reverse his decision.

To stand-in for Cage’s performance of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence we chose another temporal work, we chose Beuys’s 7,000 *Oaks* a reforestation provocation to the city of Kassel in Germany. Initially stone columns were piled high in front of the Fridericianum as a visual material challenge to placement and planting alongside 7,000 trees. As the trees succumb to the limitations of life cycle, the basalt columns confirm this is a place where a tree belongs.<sup>[30]</sup> Beuys claimed this work in terms of a contribution to the biosphere, but also as a regenerative activity for those engaging its on-going development. Sculpturally he claimed the tension between the growth of the tree and the splintering of the stone assured a ‘proportional condition’ essential and ever changing.<sup>[31]</sup>

We use these environmental-art examples to consider the applicability of the various definitions. The relational definition comprised of common language judgements is both easy to apply and open to revisions by all interested participants. Of the ten judgments six are relevant to Chin/ Chaney and Beuys, the others raise interesting questions. This model promotes a broad social discourse about our shared experiences of artwork. The functionalist definition turns on a history-informed philosophy of aesthetics and as a result slips and slides with the fluidity of that concept. The aesthetic characteristics of the work by Chin/ Chaney and Beuys are less challenging in a world after Duchamp and Cage; none-the-less those works would challenge the integrity of this definition. The institutional definition is a procedural model organised around artefact and artworld. Chin and Chaney challenge artefact directly; Beuys extends the meaning. The later case suggests a more-than-artworld development creating complications up to the point of agreement for the return of NEA arts funding. The conflicted ideas within that high-level institution; supports the idea of divergent Artworlds. The institutional definition is useful as an extension of the ‘art not art’ question; but it is better applied at the level of an exhibition rather than a single artwork. The historical definitions structure the procedures and method



of understanding the relationship between contemporary works and work in the past. The simplest definition leaves the most wiggle room, with each additional layer the process of historic analysis and the development of a historically viable narrative gains clarity and complexity. This approach offers an expert methodology whereby defensible lineages and pedigrees can be established after the work is presented. It is of little use to us here.

#### CONSIDERING THE WORK

We will discuss Gaut's relational definition as it applies to an isolated example of environmental art. This will be followed by an exhibition overview using Dickies' Institutional definition. We simplified Gaut's judgements then applied the relational ideas to five isolated elements of the *Sylva Caledonia* exhibition.<sup>[32]</sup> In the conclusion we will reflect on the effect of gatekeeping and how definition serves the long-term interests of the field. Extrapolating simple descriptions from Berys Gaut's list of common language descriptions we made a checklist. We used Y / N where judgement was clear we provided numbers where the work demanded additional consideration; below the checklist used while working on the first example. As all of this work is exhibited, we can assume in every case, the work is intended to be art.

	A RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK
Y	AESTHETIC PROPERTIES
N	EXPRESSIONS OF EMOTION
Y	INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING
1	COMPLEX YET COHERENT
2	INDIVIDUAL POINT OF VIEW
3	IS AN ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION
4	A PRODUCT OF A SKILLFUL PERSON
5	HAS RELATIONSHIP TO ARTISTIC GENRE
Y	INTENDED TO BE A WORK OF ART

*Sylva Caledonia* is an exhibition of work by artists who have received Creative Scotland<sup>[33]</sup> funding to spend time immersed in large biologically and culturally important semi-natural ancient forests in the south western Highlands of Scotland. Morven Gregor and Gerry Loose worked in the Sunart Oakwood (in Ardnamurchan), and Tim Collins and Reiko Goto focused on the Black Wood of Rannoch (a pinewood). The third component is the *ecoartscotland library* by Chris Fremantle. We will present and confine our consideration to five images of isolated objects from that exhibition as case studies about the definition of art.

The first work we will consider spells out the Gaelic name of the Blackwood of Rannoch across the bottom of one of the (pre-existing) vitrines in the Genotype / Phenotype gallery. It is one of three sculptural works complimenting each other in form and content.



Detail of *Coille Dubh Rainich (The Black Wood of Rannoch)*: Reiko Goto and Tim Collins.  
Medium – Mixed Media (2015). Photograph – Tim Collins.

This centrepiece integrates forms, signs and symbols working with living things to establish a focal point for empathic experience (with this small forest in Summerhall); which is also correspondent to the realities in the Black Wood of Rannoch. On the label we propose to ‘*to donate this work to someone with enough land and the attention necessary to nurture a small Caledonian forest from the seedlings you see before you to its mature state 300 years later.*’

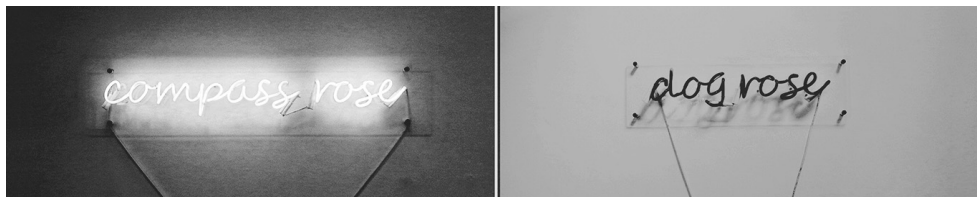
Is *Coille Dubh Rainich* (*The Black Wood of Rannoch*) a work of art? Out of nine ‘ordinary judgements’ about art, this work only cleared three easily; it has aesthetic and intellectual properties, and is intended to be art. It does not indicate expression of emotion. 1 — As an isolated autonomous artwork, it is not complex. In relationship to other works in the exhibition a viewer may presume it is an element of a complex work that explores a set of coherent ideas about culture and Caledonian forests. 2 — The individual point of view in this work is not apparent unless the reader has a sense of Goto’s practice and engagement with living things. 3 — As a sculpture the form and execution is distinct, as a provocation to establish a Caledonian Forest example in Edinburgh it is unique. 4 — Apart from the ideas that form the work, the skillset is nominal. 5 — The genre it references is sculpture, but also planters and botanical specimens. Using Gaut’s ‘ordinary judgment’ approach it is reasonable to assume it is art with an aesthetic presence, intellectual content and artist intention.



▲  
*Comh-Chomhairle Bràghad Albainn* (*The Breadalbane Deliberation*) – Tim Collins and Reiko Goto,  
 with Sara Ocklind. Translator – Beathag Mhoireasdan (2015). Photograph – Tim Collins.

This map depicts the historic district of Breadalbane as an expanded context for considering the Black Wood. It includes the upper catchment basins of the Tay River. The landscape and its features has been historically described in Gaelic on the OS Maps. Like the Gaelic language, the future form and extent of the Caledonian forest is an idea and an experience to be discussed amongst communities of interest. We offer initial translation of over 1000 Gaelic place names and the map as a contribution to the recovery of the cultural ecology of the region.

Is *The Breadalbane Deliberation* a work of art? It is intellectually challenging and complex, a product of skill and intended as art. It is hard to see emotion and an individual point of view in the work. It has been collaboratively created to serve as a focal point for conversations with Gaelic place name specialists and various interests in the region. The method raises the following questions: 1 — as a work ‘in process’ it has developing aesthetic qualities; the indications of skill are very subtle the social aspects of the work are in the foreground the material base-map is background; 2 — originality demands interrogation, one can argue for aspects of originality in the translations, the foreground work is notational. If the work is original that would be found in the intent to use it to leverage discussions about culture, place and meaning. 3 — The genre is confused, the form references assemblage and cartography, the process relates to community planning and democratic discourse. By Gaut’s standard the work is art although it has limited emotional content and the individual point of view is lost to layers of collective activity. It is art through skill and a sense that it is intellectually challenging, complex and coherent, which are typical of maps as well as artwork. Now we will look at some of Gerry Loose’s and Morven Gregor’s work.



▲  
Neon Works (*Compass Rose, Dog Rose*): Gerry Loose (2013).  
Photograph – Tim Collins.

The waters of Loch Sunart, combined with abundant rainfall, are crucial to the survival of the niche forest environment in that place as well as its intertwined history of industry and travel. Thus the neon works make play with both navigation and botany. This work (one of many developed over two years) focuses upon the dwelt, pragmatic and empirical understanding of the interconnected lives of that forest. It is one of two works in the exhibition that make concrete poetry with botany materials and/or references.

Is a *compass rose* and *the dog rose* a work of art? The light / colour quality is clearly aesthetic, it is intellectually engaging, it has an individual point of view, relates to a specific genre of conceptual art, as well as concrete poetry and Scottish landscape poetry. The aspects needing discussion are: 1 — four words, two colours (red and

blue); the viewer must unpack to find complexity and coherence in the simplicity; 2 — words in neon are hardly an original idea, although the artist's choices have authenticity, 3 — skill is defined by integration of idea and form. As a self-contained artwork (referencing botany and navigation) it is aesthetic, intellectual, and individualistic. Referencing multiple genres, an easy fit within Gaut's judgments.



▲  
*Didoes lament (Remember me)* – Morven Gregor and Gerry Loose (2015).  
 Photograph – Tim Collins.

An important counterpoint to the rest of the work in the exhibition, Gregor and Loose developed this work comprised of off cuts of scrap wood, a pyre to be burnt. The work is integrated with the reference to the aria *When I am Laid in Earth* from the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell. A song of despair sung by Dido the queen of Carthage who throws herself on a pyre after being abandoned by Aeneas.

Is *Didoes lament: Remember me* art? The work engages six judgements. It has a simple aesthetic, the emotional component arises in reference to the aria, the work is intellectually challenging forcing the viewer to move back and forth between the material/ object, the reference to the aria, then to forests. Originality is nested in the idea embedded in the title and activated by the woodpile. The work can be understood in context as arte povera or possibly concrete poetry. The method raises



questions needing discussion: 1 — the work is simple in form but complex in terms of the effort required to grasp the full idea; 2 — in the object idea and aria relationship the individual point of view is clear; 3 — the skill as we have argued before lies in the concept. This is another work fitting comfortably with Gaut's methodology.



*ecoartscotland library* – Chris Fremantle (2011 – on-going).  
Photograph – Tim Collins.

The library is a resource for artists, curators, critics, commissioners as well as scientists and policy makers. It includes the *ecoartscotland library*, as well as an online platform<sup>[34]</sup> featuring a mix of discussions about works by artists and critical theoretical texts. During the exhibition Chris Fremantle organised the Caledonian Everyday, an interdisciplinary seminar series discussed what is known about ancient woodlands, how the arts and humanities contribute to the forest other and finally how cultural institutions contribute to what we know and appreciate about forests?<sup>[35]</sup>

Is the *ecoartscotland library* art? This slips easily into Gaut's 'ordinary judgments' about art. It is an intellectually challenging body of work (as libraries are), but this library is topic specific and can be presumed to be coherent after a brief review in the exhibition. The collection reflects the point of view of the owner. In its portable design and choice of texts its originality is clear. Assembling this library has taken skill and attention to detail. The library does not evoke or express emotion.

The discussion points include: 1 — the aesthetic properties are defined by the form and function of the library; 2 — the artistic genre would be conceptual art and/or sculpture; 3 — the artist's intention is worth talking about. We assume it was once was to collect and read books. It grew into an idea to develop a portable library in support of *ecoartscotland*, (founded 2011). The intention for this library to be art is realised by its presentation in the exhibition.

#### SYNTHESIS OF THE RELATIONAL ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL

Gaut gives us permission to agree something is art, by the intent of the artist, by the presence of the work in an art gallery or by our own judgement. Having bracketed that problem the framework focuses our attention on what is most interesting in each individual artwork. With an overview of the analysis we can clearly see these works are consistently intellectually challenging, they are frequently complex but they are seldom charged with emotion. There are indications of skill and relationship to genre. What is more interesting to us is the critical potential of this framework. The assessment of *Coille Dubh Rainich* results in a surprisingly long but essential string of questions about complexity, authorship, originality, skill and genre essential to understanding that work and its live material content as artwork. We were surprised by the simplicity of affirming five judgements about the *ecoartscotland library*, but the essential questions about the library's relationship to genre and intention are spot on, essential if we are to consider it as artwork. *Didoes Lament* was the only project fitting all nine of the ordinary judgements as it had emotional content; questions raised about complexity and skills are essential to understanding it as artwork. *Comh-Chomhairle Bràghad Albainn (The Breadalbane Deliberation)* and *Compass Rose, Dog Rose* have surprising similar profiles. Reflecting on the former, questions are raised about aesthetics, originality and genre; of the latter the questions are about complexity, originality and skill. It is important to understand where questions are raised more often than not we have found it essential to a critical evaluation of the work; this is more comprehensive than expected. As we said earlier, the institutional framework has more value when applied to the exhibition than specific work. We draw some conclusions about the exhibition and its artworlds here.

It is clear that artists have made work. 1 — The exhibition has been developed and presented to a more-than-artworld. The originating curator is James Howie of the ASCUS Art + Science group, working with Summerhall and the Edinburgh Science



Festival 2015. 2 — The exhibit was developed for the Genotype / Phenotype gallery at Summerhall (occupying the former Dick Veterinary School), now a creative hub housing the Demarco Collection, the ArtiScience Library, exhibition and theatre spaces, a café, and a pub. It is an artworld public unto itself. 3 — Summerhall was the primary ‘artspace’ for the Edinburgh Science Festival. 4 — Summerhall provided the physical infrastructure and artworld context, the Edinburgh Science Festival provided the resources needed to present the work and develop a larger more diverse audience. 5 — The art / science overlap suggests an interdisciplinary network that is more-than-artworld; a fundamental complication and opportunity at the same time.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our conundrum can be understood as a problem of definition and gatekeeping but also the problem of final cause as understood by Aristotle; the purpose of what we do. Working our way through this reading we are clear that analytical philosophy runs counter to what we need-to-know about art. Gatekeeping may or may not be a result of this analytical turn; but a closed concept promotes defensible boundary. It undermines critical thinking and the development of the field, we would argue that it is simply unproductive. Berys Gaut puts us at ease. He provides a solid baseline of common judgments: The sense that the work has aesthetic and intellectual properties, and is potentially complex yet at the same time coherent; the work emerges from an individual point of view and may (or may not) express emotion. We all expect some level of skill and originality in work but that needs to be understood in relationship to genre, other creative work of its kind. But the most important element of his judgments are this baseline, if a thing is displayed, presented, exhibited or has any indication that the author intends art, then it is art. This open-concept encourages all interests providing a critical framework to begin with, while welcoming amendments and revision.

The work in *Sylva Caledonia* is unique in a lot of ways. Funded by Creative Scotland the artists have been given the room to define their own projects and the time to immerse themselves amongst people places and things, the social and ecological conditions of culturally and ecological significant native forests. Gerry Loose (a botanist and poet) and Morven Gregor (an educator and performer) work the edges of perception and its relationship to language asking us to ‘see again’, to engage the mind and the emotions as a means of challenging normative experience and

understanding. Chris Fremantle (a cultural producer) provides a sculptural form that attests to a bulk of ideas in our field that floods the landscape of fine art. During the exhibition he created a public space where other disciplines engaged the social and cultural questions of forests. Your authors Collins and Goto (artists and researchers) work with scientists and in communities to develop a series of artworks that raise questions about the record of the forest: past, the present and the future to be answered through dialogue with others.

The outstanding conundrum is, of course, the final cause. We are convinced that the artists' role (the theory, method and practice) is unique and valuable. The question is how far from the world does it have to be to retain its strengths and how close to the world can it get to find new methods and import in the interest of people, places and things poorly served by the more pragmatic disciplines?

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