

# Branching Out: Creative Collaborations with Trees

one-week short course

4-8 April 2016



*Alex Metcalf: Tree Listening*

Are you an artist, writer or performer looking to take your practice in a new direction? Are you a thinker in search of practical experiment? Are you a tree enthusiast keen to create? Or do you just want to have fun with trees?

**Branching Out** is facilitated by three contemporary artists and thinkers whose unique ways of working with trees include writing, performance, drawing, sound and installation. We aim to inspire and support you to explore new ideas and techniques, to work with unusual materials in novel environments, but no specialist knowledge is required. We welcome both amateurs and experts alike!

**Branching Out** expands conceptions of what constitutes human and other-than-human intra-action through a creative examination of being-with-trees. Our robustly researched creative exercises combine practical investigation with a thorough examination of the history of human-tree relations (as fuel, shelter, transport, weapons, tools etc.) and the imaginative tree works devised by artists through the ages (from early Japanese charcoal drawings to Giuseppe Penone's *Branches of Thought*, Ana Mendieta's *Tree of Life*, Andy

Goldsworthy's natural sculptures and Katie Paterson's *Future Library*... to name but a few).

We will explore the shift in perception that comes from tying yourself to a tree (Charles Ray), the discombobulation of acoustically penetrating a tree's internal workings (Tree Listening) and the mind-opening excitement of embodying tree-being (Other Spaces), among other innovative tree-led strategies designed to remake your sense of human-tree relations. **Branching Out** fosters a radical reconception of the ways we inhabit the world in relation to other organisms.

Join us!

## Facilitators

**Dr Camilla Nelson** is a poet, text-artist, researcher and collaborator across a range of



*Camilla Nelson: Letter*

disciplines. Her collaboration with Rhys Trimble, 'Tidal Voices', was short-listed for the Tidal Bay Swansea Lagoon [World-First Art Commission](#) (Cape Farewell) and her first full collection *Apples & Other Languages* (forthcoming with Knives Forks and Spoons) was long-listed for the 2015 [Melita Hume Poetry Prize](#). She is founding editor of [Singing Apple Press](#), a small independent press devoted to the material investigation of

poem production in relation to plants. Her thinking on language-making in relation to trees is documented in [conference papers](#), [poetry](#) and [research](#) published in national and international journals, [newspapers](#), [books](#) and [anthologies](#). She [performs](#) and [exhibits](#) her language work at conferences and festivals in the UK and abroad. Beyond her preoccupation with avant-garde poetics her research investigates intermedia and alternative approaches to knowledge formation. She was awarded her doctorate in [Reading and Writing with a Tree: Practising Nature Writing as Enquiry](#) by Falmouth University in 2012.

**Alex Metcalf** is an installation artist with a long history of working intimately with trees. His work has been commissioned and exhibited across Europe and in the US, and he is perhaps best known for his work with ‘tree listening’ which allows us to listen to the inner life of the tree as sap rises and falls throughout the day, and the vibrations of the surrounding environment are absorbed into the tree’s body. Exhibitions include art venues such as MoMa (NY), Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Fermynwoods Contemporary Arts, Tate Britain, and CCANW. Much of his work is shown in non-art venues however. These include the John Innes Centre, the Natural History Museum (Los Angeles), Woburn Abbey, WWF Nature Reserves, Alnwick Castle, Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, and RHS Harlow. His work has featured widely in print and media, including BBC1 Look North, BBC2 Autumnwatch, BBC Radio 2, 4, and World Service, and in The Observer, The Irish Times, The Times, and The Guardian newspapers.

## Guest Artist

**Tim Knowles** is best known for making visible what is, by nature or by design, unseen. Working in a range of media from photography and video to drawing and light installation, Knowles creates process-oriented works that rely on chance and environmental elements. Known for incorporating nature into his projects, in 2009 Knowles mounted a kite-like weathervane onto a helmet and followed the wind’s momentum wherever it led, recording the experience with a series of long-exposure photographs entitled “Wanderlust.” Knowles’ foray into a more man-made process resulted in “Recorded Delivery” (2011). To create this collection of video and still images, Knowles attached a camera and GPS device to a package and recorded over 20 hours of the object’s journey through the U.K.’s postal system.



*Tim Knowles: Dragon Spruce*

*The Guardian* says:

*While land artist Richard Long has tramped the earth in an attempt to understand its mass, Tim Knowles walks to comprehend its power. His art is beholden to the vagaries of the British weather, and in particular the wind, which he follows doggedly across the countryside wearing a Heath Robinson-style device that indicates its direction and the path he should follow. These journeys have ranged from a perilous two-day excursion across Dartmoor to wandering through the lamp-lit streets of London at midnight. Each of these endeavours is captured on film. When Knowles returns to the studio, he refers to the GPS and redraws the route, creating a finely wrought image that charts his meandering walk across the countryside.*

*These expeditions were inspired by a hot-air balloon accident in which Knowles broke his leg. Far from scaring him off adventure for life, the frustrating period of recuperation proved the spur for a series of arduous challenges. Perhaps the riskiest was an ongoing project he calls Nightwalks, a series of excursions across the countryside conducted during new moons last year. The artist sets up a large-format camera on a long exposure, then scales treacherous ridges and inches along precipices for an hour while carrying three flashlights. The resulting images reveal thin streaks of amber light, shuddering across the pitch black.*



*Tim Knowles: Circular Weeping Willow (2014)*