




MODULE 2

# Training Package 2.1

## Learning about Climate Change with Art

	<p><b>Lesson's description</b></p>	<p>The lesson provides useful information that connects climate change with art</p>
	<p><b>Goal</b></p>	<p>The aim of this lesson is to educate and link current issues such as Climate Change with Art</p>
	<p><b>Learning outcomes</b></p>	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how art can contribute toward fighting climate change</li> </ul> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to create a link between art and the environment</li> </ul> <p>Attitudes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach climate change as an integral element of your practices</li> </ul>

### 1. Identifying how art can contribute toward fighting climate change

Art and arts-based practices are increasingly seen as a powerful way of developing a meaningful connection with climate change (Bentz and O'Brien 2019; Shrivastava et al. 2012). Artistic and creative practices and approaches can help expand our imaginaries of the future, opening up our minds to new scenarios of change. Art's potential to transform society, as well as its capacity to support agency and inspire feelings of hope, responsibility, and care, has been known for a long time (Boal 2000) and esthetic practices can contribute to deep emotional learning about sustainability. For example, artistic practices can create openness towards more than human worlds, providing access to different sources of cognitive, emotional, and sensual experiences (Pearson et al., 2018). Art has the capacity to raise awareness, to engage creativity for addressing complex problems, and may also support transformation to sustainability (Dieleman 2017).



However, the impact and outcome of a given climate-art project depends on the very nature of it. Here, I propose a framework for understanding and guiding arts-based practices to be used in different ways and for fostering different depths of engagement of a given target group of participants and audiences (see Table 1). In the following section, I illustrate the three depths of engagement in climate change depicted in Table 1, including in art, where art is used as a platform for introducing or communicating the issue; with art, where art serves as a medium to facilitate dialogue and express learning; and through art which conceptualizes art as a means of transformation. Transformation has been conceptualized as a change in societal systems, structures, and relationships, and carries with it a promise of moving the world towards equity and sustainability (O'Brien 2012).

Table 1. Climate engagement in, with, and through art

<b>In art</b>	<b>With art</b>	<b>Through art</b>
<p><i>Art as platform for introducing the issue/as communication</i></p> <p><b>Characteristics:</b> Aesthetic, attractive, accessible communication of climate change; goal oriented</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Illustrating climate change with comics, infographic, or documentaries</p>	<p><i>Art as medium to facilitate dialogue and express learning</i></p> <p><b>Characteristics:</b> Participatory, experiential, community engaging; process and goal oriented</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Providing creative experiences related to climate change including art-&amp;science labs and participatory art</p>	<p><i>Art as means of transformation</i></p> <p><b>Characteristics:</b> Co-creational, transdisciplinary, open-ended; process oriented</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Using art as a process to discover meanings of climate change, and to deepen and embody experiences e.g., through dance, storytelling, or independently creating an artwork prompted by an open-ended and personally relevant climate-related question</p>

## 2. Identifying ways to raise awareness of climate change through art

Apart from facilitating dialogue and the expression of learning, art can operate on a profound, transformative level. It can be a process that engages people with climate change on a deep, emotional, and personal level. It has been argued that at its best, art can be emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving (Leavy 2015). For instance, a theater on the experience of a forest fire can



communicate emotional aspects of life in a way that creates a deep connection with the audience, evoking compassion, empathy, as well as understanding and meaning.

The creation of personal meaning usually involves more than the cognitive aspects of climate change. It requires the inclusion of ethical, affective, and aesthetic knowledge, which affect how we interpret and assign value to certain aspects of our life (Castree et al. 2014). Arts practices allow multiple meanings instead of pushing authoritative claims by implying which meanings are considered relevant or correct. In that sense, a piece of visual art, for example, can be interpreted in many different ways depending on the viewer as well as the context of viewing. Another way of creating meaning is through stories. Storytelling and writing are fundamental parts of human life. To a certain extent, we tell stories to give meaning to our lives (Bochner and Riggs 2014). Stories can make us feel connected, open our eyes to new perspectives, stimulate self-awareness or social reflection.

Artistic and creative practices can also include embodied experiences. This is particularly relevant when we consider that all experiences are ultimately embodied and that it is through the senses that we come to know (Wiebe and Snowber 2011). Dance and theater, as particularly embodied practices, can incorporate words and narratives. When we understand the body as having meaning in itself, as opposed to a container where meaning is stored, we can use it as a means to pose questions, connect with emotions, and understand theoretical concepts. This way, dance and movement can challenge norms that are embodied and rendered invisible. It can be argued that it is through the body that we can see and experience differently.

### 3. Approach climate change as an integral element of their practices

More and more arts and humanities educators explore climate change as a topic within their classes (Monroe et al. 2017; A. B. Siegner 2018; A. Siegner and Stapert 2019). Usually, they rely on teachings from the natural science disciplines and the biophysical discourse, for example, by reading informative texts about climate change, watching documentaries, applying learning games or by using climate change as a theme for illustrations, paintings, or drawings (Climate Generation 2019; Cooper and Nisbet 2017; Dieleman and Huislingh 2006; Vethanayagam and Hemalatha 2010).

For example, teaching climate change in the arts and humanities courses can be done more holistically, by drawing on the integrative discourse. An integrative discourse sees climate change as interconnected with multiple processes of environmental, economic, political, and cultural change and closely linked to individual and shared norms, beliefs, values, and worldviews (Leichenko and O'Brien 2020). Integrating multiple perspectives, the integrative discourse approaches climate change as a transformative process involving the environment as well as communities and our relationship to nature and each other. Teaching climate change in arts disciplines using an integrative discourse is an approach that is already being applied in schools in Finland. The Finnish climate guide (Sipari 2016) contains tips and tools for multidisciplinary climate education as early as in the primary level.