

# Telling climate change stories through the arts

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## Abstract

The Track Zero Charitable Trust (<http://trackzero.nz>) was founded in early 2018 with the goal of inspiring action on climate change through engagement with the arts. The main motivation is that artistic expression connects on an emotional level in a way that direct communication of science does not. Also, around 80 percent of New Zealanders engage in some way with the arts, a much larger audience than those who take an active interest in science. This presentation discusses the first major activity of TrackZero, a series of public meetings around New Zealand where scientists partnered with local arts practitioners to interact with audiences on the science, on people's feelings and concerns, and on ways forward to action on adapting to or mitigating climate change. Different communities had different concerns and the range of conversations was rich and varied. While no formal evaluation has been carried out, we provide some general reflections on impact and engagement, and ideas for future activities.



# Telling climate change stories through the arts

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“What is  
possible  
in art  
becomes  
thinkable  
in life”

Brian Eno

“

Art, by its nature, is political, social and spiritual because it speaks about human values, emotions and thoughts that are deeply held – in fact it speaks about the essence of life. And right now, that life is threatened by the climate crisis. Artistic expression can contribute to knowledge and innovation, make science more accessible and reconnect us with nature. The arts can successfully challenge incumbent values and ideas and be a catalyst for change - helping us to shape a future we all want!”

Carla van Zon ONZM  
Former Artistic Director for both the  
New Zealand Festival and Auckland Arts Festival  
and Track Zero Board Trustee

Arts + Climate  
Innovation Roadshow

Art / Climate?

**Arts + Climate Innovation,** is a series of presentations and discussions about climate change and how the arts can be a powerful change agent to inspire climate action.

We worked with arts practitioners (musicians, dancers, painters, sculptors,...) to engage the public in conversation at venues all over New Zealand – Aotearoa.

Different communities had different concerns and forms of expression. A common theme is the *local*, what does global change mean for my family, my neighbourhood? And the importance of tangata whenua, *indigenous knowledge* and cultures.

The public are receptive to science put in plain language. Artistic expression is a powerful way to encourage conversations and inspire change.

Current Project:

What if  
climate  
change  
was  
purple?

**Track Zero** aims to inspire New Zealanders working with the power of the arts, to create a resilient, carbon neutral society that's fair for all of us.

Art makes us *feel*, connecting on an emotional level, in ways that direct communication of science does not. Around 80% of New Zealanders engage in some way with the arts, a much larger audience than those who take an active interest in science.

Quantification of outputs:

**785**

people participated in  
11 Roadshow events.  
7 out of 11 events booked  
out (free registration via  
Eventbrite)

**5/40**

5 expert scientists  
and 40 local prominent artists

**17**

channels  
of media  
coverage

Manawatu Standard  
<http://bit.ly/2ms4tz>  
Otago Daily Times  
<http://bit.ly/2kx73n4>

**9628**

views of five short event  
videos recorded

Nelson event  
<http://bit.ly/2k3LCax>  
Whangarei event  
<http://bit.ly/2mtXas4>



**117,420**

combined Facebook reach

## Creating Resources

Two climate science education resources.  
Live presentations by Prof. James Renwick 'Climate Change Science 101'  
and by Prof. Tim Naish, 'Sea Level Rise and Climate Change Science 101'.  
617 views and used in a polytechnic design course.

Resource videos  
<http://bit.ly/2m6Fmmq>

Two art and climate science education videos.  
Live presentations by Artist, Nic Moon, and Social Scientist Dr Charlotte  
Sunde from the Cawthron Institute.

Resource videos  
<http://bit.ly/2m6Fmmq>



New collaborations between artists and scientists to co-create climate change art works that inspire action. Initial workshop November 2019, collaborative work sponsored through 2020.



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