



CORE

Creative Outreach for
Resource Efficiency

CL4W

 Cleaning Land
for Wealth

Instruments of the Afterlife

Creative Outreach for Resource Efficiency (CORE) supported the delivery of a vibrant and creative outreach programme helping academics to “get out of the lab” and communicate world class science to new audiences.

The CL4W project explored ways in which contaminated land could be brought back to life using plants to collect toxic metals such as arsenic, and how these plants could then be processed by bacteria to form useful metal nanoparticles.

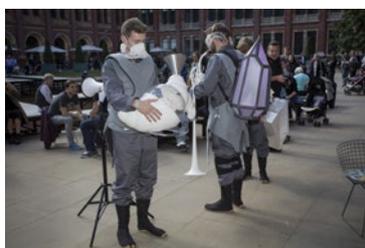
The CL4W team – supported by CORE – decided to work with internationally renowned art-duo BurtonNitta to reach new audiences for their scientific work.

Public Engagement Lead for the CL4W project, Dr Louise Horsfall from the University of Edinburgh led the project, supported by Professor Phil Longhurst from Cranfield University. Together, they worked closely with the artists on behalf of the multidisciplinary project group.

BurtonNitta visited each university within the CL4W group (Birmingham, Cranfield, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Warwick) interviewing the biologists, scientists and engineers, taking photographs of them at work and filming them.

They then produced diagrams and artwork that communicated what the project was about, showing the relationships between the engineering processes and the synthetic biology as well as the desired results – to clean land that is currently contaminated and gain valuable materials from the process. These were checked with the scientists to make sure that they had captured their work effectively.

From meeting with the scientists, BurtonNitta then developed a piece called “Instruments of the Afterlife”, that would engage with a wider public. This involved a performance, artefacts, music, and a story that would provoke an audience response. It was first aired at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London in September, 2015.

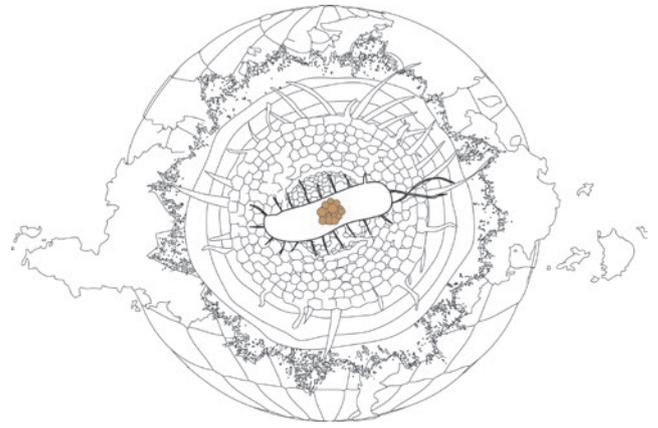


Key to success

Choosing artists that the group trusted and could work with was key to the success of this project. It was vital that the group could communicate their work to the artists, and feel that their work would be interpreted in an appropriate way. Although the artists were provided with a brief, it was kept deliberately open to interpretation, as the scientists did not want to constrain the artistic endeavours.

→ “This project turned science into science fiction, which in turn engaged the public in science.”

Professor Phil Longhurst, Cranfield University



Over 500 visitors watched the performance

Professor Phil Longhurst said:

“At the V&A we reached different audiences that we don’t normally talk to. As scientists, we rarely speak to artists, or people from the creative industries – yet the UK is so good at producing these! While watching the performance, it really struck me, there can be the potential for an ongoing, contemporary connection between science and art that can be very powerful – it can have a real influence.”

After the initial performance at the V&A Museum, Instruments of the Afterlife has toured internationally, sharing the work of the CL4W team with a new, global audience of thousands of art-lovers. The impact of this reach is hard to quantify, but one thing is certain – working with creative artists has ensured that the work of the CL4W project has reached new audiences, and sparked interest in the work of the researchers that would never have occurred through more traditional impact methods.

→ **Impact is about reaching new audiences as well as bigger audiences**

Our recommendations

Thinking of working with artists to engage with new audiences? Here are our recommendations for a successful collaboration:

- Choose artists that you trust, and feel comfortable working with.
- Choose artists that have a track record in working with scientists and academics.
- Provide the artists with a brief, but keep it open, so that you do not constrain the artistic endeavour.
- Make the time to communicate with the artists, so they can get to know you and your work.
- Be prepared for the unexpected!

Led by Loughborough University, Creative Outreach for Resource Efficiency (CORE) was a collaboration between the Universities of East Anglia, Cranfield, Edinburgh, Loughborough, Manchester, Surrey and Warwick.

Cleaning Land for Wealth (CL4W) was a collaboration between the Universities of Birmingham, Cranfield, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Warwick.