

# WHAT LIES WITHIN

Centre of  
the Centre

Mel O'Callaghan  
Laurent Grasso  
Pamela Rosenkranz  
Suzanne Treister

**Study Guide:**  
**Secondary Level**

## PRE-VISIT

A discussion on the relation of nature, science and human psyche can begin with questions such as

- 1) what does science say about nature and human?*
- 2) how does nature influence science and human beings?*
- 3) what effects does science have on nature and human beings?*
- 4) how do human beings work with science and nature?*

Have the students ask their own questions about the relation of nature, science and human psyche.

Show them samples of works of art where these relations are explored or artists who explored these relations such as Leonardo Da Vinci, James Turrell, or those featured in this exhibition (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fn-hum.2011.00110/full>).

Ask them to give other examples.

## VISIT

While viewing Mel Callaghan's work, have the students note that these are results of collaboration with the ff: Dr. Daniel Fornari and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution US, Dr. Anna Louise Reysenbach, Macrobiochemist, Portland State University US, Dr Matt Smith and Ethan Conrad, Florida State University US, Yvon Goude of Goude Glass, Rennes, France and cinematographer Dennis Corpuz of the Philippines. Have the students recall documentaries they've seen of the sea, marine life and have them compare these with the work in front of them. What are they feeling when they are watching the film?

Extremophiles or organisms that live in physically or geochemically extreme conditions can be seen in the film. Extreme conditions were what the glass sculpture underwent. Have them recall to the ways in which glass has been used through the years and explain that contemporary artists have combined glass with new technologies and used it as element of performance as in the case of Respire.

The sound that is heard in the work of Laurent Grasso is that of the earth's resonance as well as sacred chants. Can they distinguish one from the other? Sound is one way by which the artist looks into the relationship of people with the environment -- in this case the relationship of the traditional owners of the land as represented by Otto Jungarrayi Sims. How does sound

give one insight into one's relationship with the environment? According to Grasso, this work is his way of translating what is immaterial/intangible into material form. Ask the students to name something immaterial/intangible and if there have been attempts to turn these into material form.

Listen to the story of HFT The Gardener. Ask your students if they have heard or read stories similar to this. Do they believe the story? Why or why not? Have them look at the images. Do they recognize any of the plants? Are they familiar with the names of the companies? Can the diagrams help them understand the connection among all these information? Is the connection easily seen? You can go into a discussion on skills, etc needed to be able to see relations/interrelatedness among things.

What is the 'firm being' referred to in the work? Ask your students if they can identify where the bottles came from, just by looking at the brand name. Now have them identify the clientele or those who buy the bottle/whom the marketers target for these bottles by looking at the skin tone which the liquid. According to the artist, the resolution to the challenge of identifying the origins of the bottles that she found floating in the canals of Venice which was their geologically-determined minerals inspired the work.

## POST-VISIT

Divide the class into 7 groups to present the different theories on the origin of life through animation, a game, etc.. You can also invite a biologist, an anthropologist, geologist and cosmologists to speak about the origins of life from their discipline's perspective. Ask the students which theory/ies and perspective would apply to Mel O'Callaghan's work. If they are to choose another theory, what artworks would they make inspired by this theory?

The artist's interest in the Northern Territory is because of the electromagnetic fields because of the metal mines. They can do research on other places that have strong electromagnetic fields and the stories about those places. Have them work on their representation of the stories and the electromagnetic fields of these places.

Have the class list down the minerals and other elements in water bottles and those that can be found in synthetic products. This can be a starting point for a discussion on what is natural and what is not natural, and where humans are in the spectrum. An algorithm is usually used for computer and mathematical operations. Hold a contest for the best algorithm written in ordinary language to solve a problem. You can also have them create posters that show the influence of algorithms and its dangers, especially in decision making.