

# Proposal ISEA 2018

Dr Tracey M Benson | Josiah Jordan

This paper / installation explores a project-in-progress titled *Waters of the Past*. The project has emerged from residencies in the Faroe Islands, Iceland, New Zealand and Norway in 2016-17. The paper specifically addresses a sub-project which has emerged from the larger body of work - *Journey of the Ancients*, which is a collaboration between Tracey Benson and Josiah Jordan.

The project explores the iconography of the sea and natural environment as a juxtaposition to ancient runic symbols. These symbols represent a culture and language lost as well as a 'proxy' for ancestral links to the old country.

The first stage of the work took the form of a video installation featuring an audio composition created by Josiah using Tracey's DNA. The raw DNA data was translated into MIDI notes and assigned instrumentation for each chromosome relevant to Tracey's Norse ancestry. The resulting composition connects the audience to this ancestral link, while providing an abstract space for contemplation.



Documentation of *Walking with the Ancients*, DNA Music Video Installation, Balance Unbalance, Plymouth UK 2017 © Tracey M Benson

Josiah and Tracey started to work together after the SCANZ Te Mahia residency in New Zealand in February 2017. They identified many synergies between their interests and were both seeking to create AR and VR works that had the potential to be meditative, hopeful and connected to nature.

*Journey of the Ancients* seeks to create a meditative space for audiences, one that takes them on a journey to the inner world of deep contemplation. Although the material is a reference to Tracey's ancestral connections to Norse culture, the imagery and sounds are intended to evoke connection much more broadly.

The use of the Runes is both as a means to connect ancient knowledge but also as a pathway to greater earth awareness. Each of the 24 runes from the Elder Futhark responds to an aspect of nature - both the natural world and our human nature. Each one offers the opportunity to consider ways to acknowledge and respect the elements and limitations of that nature.



*Rune journey: Messages from the shore*  
Found objects, stones carved with shell  
Korpúlsstaðir, Iceland, 2016

*Journey of the Ancients* is now evolving into a VR experience which will combine the DNA music with the Runes to create an interactive experience for audiences.

So far our project has been presented at a number of forums: Balance UnBalance 2017, Plymouth UK; RIXC Open Fields 2017, Riga Latvia and as guided meditation at Kulturehuset Hovtun 2017, Klokkearstua, Norway.



Documentation of *The Call: Crawick Multiverse*, Scotland, September 2017  
 Multi-site outdoor performance, Led by Katharine Vega  
 Photograph by Michelle Proksell

## About the artists



### Tracey Benson

Tracey Benson is an artist, social scientist and researcher based in Canberra. She focuses on issues related to wellbeing, sustainability behaviour change, energy futures and water. She explores a range of media including open data, augmented and virtual reality, often collaborating with cultural owners and scientists. Tracey is also a part-time academic at the Faculty of Art and Design and a Professional Associate of the Institute of Applied Ecology at University of Canberra. Tracey has a PhD from ANU and is currently undertaking a Masters of Applied Science by Research at the Institute of Applied Ecology.



## Josiah Jordan

Josiah Jordan started his career as an aerospace engineer, designing and building a space-bound solar imaging camera at the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics in Boulder, Colorado. After 3 years in aerospace he switched paths to software development, creating virtual aircraft configuration software for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Moving to New Zealand in 2009, he most recently was focused on creating cloud-based scalable render farms and a rich web application platform for the Internet of Things space. He now owns and operate [Lobaki](#), a company specializing in teaching VR development to at-risk youth, and creating commercial VR experiences. In his spare time he collaborates on artistic projects,

with a focus on DNA music and VR experiences.