

Embodying Symbiosis

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¹ *Small Friends Books, 136a Cromwell St, Collingwood VIC 3066 Australia*

Abstract

Join us for a very special 1-hour workshop, designed for AELA’s “The future of Australian environmental law” conference. Participants are invited to participate in a story telling session based on creative works focusing on the symbiosis of microorganisms and the macro world. They are then invited to cooperate as a group through a process-based, art-making experience that embodies an interdependent, symbiotic community. These activities are designed to expand and deepen eco-literacy beyond that which is individual, logical or purely language-based. This workshop offers conference delegates an opportunity to immerse in an imaginative experience, to complement the intellectually rigorous presentations and conversations hosted in the other conference sessions.

The workshop is based on the amazing *Small Friends* book series, which tell stories about microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, viruses) and the intimate and ancient relationships they have with larger forms of life. Through the mediums of storytelling and illustration, this arts-science fusion encourages empathy, embodiment and eco-literacy, crucial to the transformation of our current legal system and attitudes towards the natural world. Created by a team of artists, scientists, writers and educators, the *Small Friends* series promotes the idea that cooperation between organisms, not just competition is a dominant paradigm of nature.

The second book in the *Small Friends* series, *Zobi and the Zoox* is an award-winning, science-adventure story that explores a community of symbiotic microbes within a single coral polyp on the Great Barrier Reef. This abstract and complex world is conveyed and embodied through engaging narrative and detailed illustration, encouraging the reader to empathise and connect with bacteria, dinoflagellates (marine plankton), mucus and molecules as dynamic characters and life-forms; every one playing a vital role within the coral reef ecosystem. Narrated from the perspective of microorganisms, the storytelling acknowledges the agency of these tiny creatures, stimulating thought around their place and fundamental rights in this world.

BIOGRAPHY

Aviva Reed (ME, BSC)

Visual ecologist & illustrator of *Small Friends books*.

Aviva Reed is an interdisciplinary visual ecologist. Her work aims to explore time and scale in relation to self and ecology, using storytelling and visual aids to communicate complex scientific ideas, and evoke an ecological imagination. Aviva received her Bachelor of Science in 2006 from the University of Tasmania and her Masters of Environment, at the University of Melbourne, in 2015. Her research paper explored the building of ecological ontologies through the art/science nexus. She has completed numerous bodies of work using the mediums of drawings, paintings, mixed media, community development, performance and installation.

Gregory Crocetti (BSC *hons*, Phd Microbiology, DipEd)

Science director – *Small Friends books*

Co-director of Scale Free Network: art-science collaborative

After working as a microbial ecologist in various university laboratories for a decade, Gregory gained teaching qualifications and experience, facilitating primary and secondary school science programs with CSIRO education. Since co-founding Scale Free Network in 2007, Gregory has increasingly worked to collaboratively combine aspects of science (particularly microscopes and microscopic imagery) with art (particularly drawing) to observe the hidden worlds around us. Gregory now

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publishes and co-authors the *Small Friends* book series – a series of symbiosis storybooks, telling positive stories about microorganisms – without which, we could not exist.

Briony Barr (BA, BFA, MFA)

Art director – *Small Friends* books

Co-director of Scale Free Network: art-science collaborative

Briony Barr is a conceptual artist who collaborates with science and scientists. Since 2008, she has worked with microbiologist Dr. Gregory Crocetti as part of Scale Free Network, an art-science collaborative that creates workshops, installations and publishes the *Small Friends* book series. At the other end of the scale, she collaborates with astrophysicist Dr. Andrew Melatos on an ongoing project called 'Drawing on Complexity'. Briony is an honorary fellow of the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, appearing in diverse publications including Big Kids Magazine and Vogue Korea.